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NO. 43
SEPTEMBER



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TALES

FROM THE

CRYPT

®

FEATURING...



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



JACK DAVIS

ARE YOU A RED DUPE?

IN THE TOWN OF GAZOOSKY IN THE HEART OF SOVIET RUSSIA, YOUNG MELVIN BLIZUNKEN-SKOVITCHSKY PUBLISHED A **COMIC MAGAZINE...**



... SO THEY CAME AND **SMASHED** HIS FOUR-COLOR PRESS...



... AND **HUNG POOR MELVIN** THE NEXT MORNING!



- HERE IN AMERICA, WE CAN **STILL** PUBLISH COMIC MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, SUCKS, BOOKS AND THE BIBLE. WE DON'T **HAVE** TO SEND THEM TO A CENSOR FIRST. NOT **YET...**
- FOR THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN AMERICA WHO WOULD **LIKE** TO CENSOR... WHO WOULD **LIKE** TO SUPPRESS COMICS. IT ISN'T THAT THEY DON'T LIKE COMICS FOR **THEM!** THEY DON'T LIKE THEM FOR **YOU!**
- THESE PEOPLE SAY THAT **COMIC BOOKS** AREN'T AS GOOD FOR CHILDREN AS **NO** COMIC BOOKS, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE NO-GOODS. SOME ARE DO-GOODERS. SOME ARE WELL-MEANING. AND SOME ARE JUST PLAIN MEAN.
- BUT WE ARE CONCERNED WITH AN AMAZING REVELATION. AFTER MUCH SEARCHING OF NEWSPAPER FILES, WE'VE MADE AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY:

THE GROUP MOST ANXIOUS TO DESTROY COMICS ARE THE COMMUNISTS!

- WE'RE SERIOUS! NO KIDDIN'! HERE! READ THIS:

THE (COMMUNIST) "DAILY WORKER" OF JULY 13, 1953 SAID THAT COMICS PLAY THE CONSCIOUS ROLE OF:

"...BRUTALIZING AMERICAN YOUTH, THE BETTER TO PREPARE THEM FOR MILITARY SERVICE IN IMPLEMENTING OUR GOVERNMENT'S AIMS OF WORLD DOMINATION, AND TO ACCEPT THE ATROCITIES NOW BEING PERPETRATED BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN IN KOREA UNDER THE FLAG OF THE UNITED NATIONS."

THIS ARTICLE ALSO QUOTES GERSHON LEGMAN (WHO CLAIMS TO BE A GHOST WRITER FOR DR. FREDERICK WERTHAM, THE AUTHOR OF A RECENT BLAST AGAINST COMICS PUBLISHED IN "THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL"). THIS SAME G. LEGMAN, IN ISSUE #3 OF "NEUROTICA", PUBLISHED IN AUTUMN 1948, SAID:

"THE CHILD'S NATURAL CHARACTER... MUST BE DISTORTED TO FIT CIVILIZATION... FANTASY VIOLENCE WILL PARALYZE HIS RESISTANCE, DIVERT HIS AGGRESSION TO UNREAL ENEMIES AND FRUSTRATIONS, AND IN THIS WAY PREVENT HIM FROM REBELLING AGAINST PARENTS AND TEACHERS... THIS WILL SIPHON OFF HIS RESISTANCE AGAINST SOCIETY, AND PREVENT REVOLUTION."

- SO THE **NEXT** TIME SOME JOKER GETS UP AT A P.T.A. MEETING, OR STARTS JABBERING ABOUT THE "NAUGHTY COMIC BOOKS" AT YOUR LOCAL CANDY STORE, GIVE HIM THE **ONCE-OVER**. WE'RE NOT SAYING HE **IS** A COMMUNIST! HE MAY BE INNOCENT OF THE WHOLE THING! HE MAY BE A **DUPE!** HE MAY NOT EVEN **READ** THE "DAILY WORKER"! IT'S JUST THAT HE'S **SWALLOWED THE RED BAIT... HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER!**

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THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! HI, LOW-LIFERS! YEP, IT'S YOUR LURID LIBRARIAN, THE CRYPT-KEEPER, READY TO OPEN ANOTHER SQUEAL-SESSION HERE IN THE CRYPT WITH ANOTHER OF MY FAVORITE TWISTED-TALES OF TORMENT AND TORTURE. SO, COME ON IN AND SIT DOWN ON THAT BLOOD-STAINED STONE MARKER THERE AND I'LL BEGIN THE YELP-YARN I CALL...

FOUR-WAY SPLIT



ROY DIXON AWOKE WITH A START, KNOWING SOMETHING WAS WRONG. HE OPENED HIS PUZZLED EYES, LOOKED AROUND BLANKLY... AND SCREAMED. WHERE WAS HE? WHAT WAS THIS COLD GREY STONE ROOM THAT BOXED HIM IN LIKE A TRAPPED ANIMAL? WHAT WAS THAT STEADY HISS, LIKE A THOUSAND VENOMOUS REPTILES? WHY WAS HE BOUND HELPLESSLY TO THIS IRON CHAIR? HE STRUGGLED FURIOUSLY, BUT THE ROPES ONLY BRUISED HIS FLESH. HIS THROAT WAS TORN RAW BY HIS WILD PLEADING SCREAMS THAT ONLY DEAFENED HIS OWN EARS...

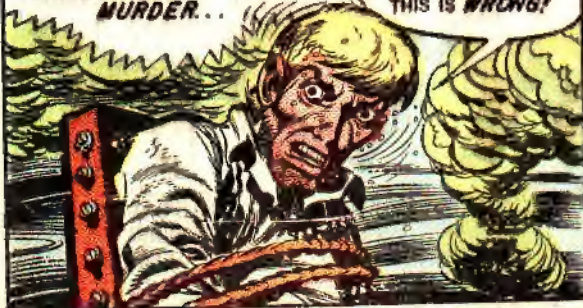
PLEASE! HELP ME, SOMEBODY! LET ME
OUT OF HERE! YA AAAAAHHHHH...



BUT NOBODY CAME TO RELEASE ROY FROM HIS NIGHT-MARISH TRAP. AND HE SEEMED TO HEAR A GHASTLY HOLLOW-TONED VOICE ECHO AND REVERBERATE THROUGH THE GRIM ROOM...

I SENTENCE YOU, ROY DIXON, TO EXECUTION IN THE GAS CHAMBER FOR FIRST DEGREE MURDER...

G-GAS CHAMBER! NO! NO! LET ME OUT! THIS IS WRONG!



NOW THE WILDLY SQUIRMING PRISONER COULD SEE... DIMLY... THE HOODED FIGURE PEERING IN AT HIM IMPASSIONATELY THROUGH THE OBSERVATION WINDOW, REGULATING THE FLOW OF LETHAL CYANIDE GAS THAT HISSED FROM THE GRILLED VENT IN THE FLOOR. HIS EXECUTIONER!

NO! IT CAN'T BE! THIS IS WRONG! NOT THE WAY I PLANNED IT AT ALL! YOU CAN'T DO THIS! IT'S A MISTAKE! PLEASE! OH, LORD... STOP HIM!



BUT THERE WAS NO ANSWER FROM THE HOODED WATCHER. ROY DIXON'S BRAIN CLOUDED NOW. HIS SENSES REELED CRAZILY AS THE DEADLY VAPORS WERE ABSORBED FROM HIS HEAVING LUNGS INTO HIS RACING BLOODSTREAM... HIS CHIN SAGGED... HIS HEAD LOLLED. HE WAS DYING...

THIS...IS ALL WRONG! IT... CAN'T BE...TRUE!



WAS IT A DREAM? A HIDEOUS NIGHTMARE? IT MUST BE THAT! ROY CLUNG TO THAT REASSURING THOUGHT AS THE STONE ROOM SPUN AND FADED BEFORE HIS BLURRING EYES. DREAMILY, HIS MEMORY REACHED BACK...BACK TO THE RAW, RED DAYS OF WORLD WAR II WHEN HE AND BUCK GORDON HAD BEEN AIR FORCE BUDDIES...

BOMBARDIER TO PILOT! TARGET'S DEAD AHEAD!

ROGER! READY FOR RUN! LET'S GO GET 'EM!



OF COURSE, THAT SORT OF THING HAD BEEN DURING OFF-DUTY HOURS. ON DUTY, IT WAS CAPTAIN BUCK GORDON, PILOT, AND SECOND LIEUTENANT ROY DIXON, BOMBARDIER... AND NO MORE...

SHAKE THE LEAD OUT LIEUTENANT! THERE'S A WAR ON! REMEMBER?

AW, BUCK! I... OH...YES, SIR!



ONCE IN THE AIR, GUIDING HIS ROARING METAL MONSTER, PREGNANT WITH BOMBS, BUCK HAD ALWAYS BEEN ALL BRASS RIGHT THROUGH TO HIS STEEL-SPRING SPINE...

PILOT TO BOMBARDIER! THIS IS A PRIME TARGET TONIGHT! UNDERSTAND? DON'T MISS...OR YOU'LL NEVER RIDE MY SHIP AGAIN.

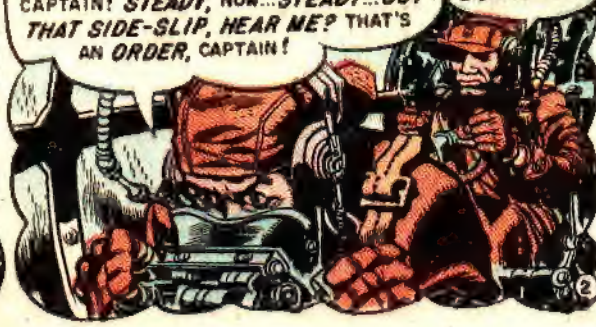
Y-YES, SIR!



YES, THAT'D BEEN BUCK...PULLING RANK, BROWBEATING THE CREW, GLORIFYING IN HIS SILVER BARRED AUTHORITY. BUT ROY'D RUBBED IT IN GOOD, MAKING BUCK SQUIRM AND FUME HELPLESSLY WHEN HIS CHANCE CAME... ON THE BOMBING RUN...WHEN HE WAS IN COMMAND...

TARGET SIGHTED! TAKING OVER, CAPTAIN! STEADY, NOW...STEADY...CUT THAT SIDE-SLIP, HEAR ME? THAT'S AN ORDER, CAPTAIN!

Y-YES, LIEUTENANT!



BUT THEN, BETWEEN MISSIONS, THEY'D BEEN THICK AS THIEVES AGAIN... BUYING EACH OTHER DRINKS AND PLANNING THEIR FUTURE... AFTER THE WAR...

THINK OF IT, ROY... OUR OWN AIRLINE... HAULING AIR FREIGHT... YOU AND ME... PARTNERS! ALL WE'D NEED IS ONE SURPLUS FOUR ENGINE JOB TO GET STARTED!

SOUNDS GREAT, BUCK! COUNT ME IN! SHAKE...

AND SO, ONE GLORIOUS POST-WAR MORNING, THEY'D STOOD PROUDLY BEFORE THEIR QUONSET HANGAR... BUSINESS PARTNERS...

THE BUCKROY AIRLINES UNFOLDS ITS SILVER WINGS... TA-TA-TA-TAA!

CAN THE CLOWNING, ROY! WE'VE GOT A MORTGAGE TO PAY OFF ON THAT OLD RECONDITIONED B-29! LET'S GET TO WORK...

FINALLY, AFTER WEEKS OF LEG-WORK, THEY'D LANDED THEIR FIRST CONTRACT, AND FLYING THEIR FIRST LOAD HAD BEEN JUST LIKE OLD TIMES... TOO MUCH LIKE OLD TIMES...

NO LOAFING, ROY! GET BACK AND CHECK THE CARGO!

STILL PULLIN' RANK, BUCK? THE WAR'S OVER, CHUM! REMEMBER THAT! WE'RE PARTNERS!

ROY LIFTED HIS HEAD GROGGILY. THE PAST FADED. THE HISSING OF THE LETHAL GAS WAS GONE...

I'M ALIVE! THE GAS CHAMBER HAS VANISHED! IT WAS A DREAM! IT'S DAWN NOW! I'M AWAKE! I KNEW THEY NEVER BROUGHT ME TO TRIAL... NEVER SENTENCED ME TO THE GAS CHAMBER. I KNEW! IT WAS ALL... A ... DREAM...



BUT WHAT WAS THIS? WHAT WAS THIS NEW TORTURE ROY WAS SUDDENLY AWARE OF? WHY WAS IT SO HARD TO BREATHE? WHAT WAS AROUND ROY'S NECK... SQUEEZING... SQUEEZING...

OH, LORD! I'M ON A SCAFFOLD! THIS IS A... CHOKE... NOOSE AROUND MY NECK! I'M BEING HUNG!

I SENTENCE YOU, ROY DIXON, TO BE HANGED BY THE NECK UNTIL DEAD!



THE NOOSE STEADILY TIGHTENED, CLAMPING HIS WINDPIPE SHUT FROM THE WEIGHT OF HIS BODY. SOMETIMES THIS GHASTLY THING HAPPENED... THE VICTIM'S NECK UNBROKEN BY THE DROPPING TRAP... LETTING HIM DIE A SLOW HORRIFYING DEATH BY STRANGULATION... DRAGGING HIM INTO A SUFFOCATING ETERNITY...

NO! NO! YOU CAN'T HANG ME! I ESCAPED THE LAW! THIS IS A DREAM, I'M SURE! ANOTHER HORRIBLE... DREAM...



ROY'S MIND SANK INTO A DEEP DARK POOL AGAIN OUT OF WHICH PUFFED VISIONS OF THE PAST CAME ONCE MORE... REVIEWING HIS ASSOCIATION WITH BUCK GORDON. EVEN THOUGH THEIR AIRLINE'D EXPANDED THROUGH THE YEARS, UP INTO GOLDEN BRACKETS, BUCK'D KEPT IT UP... HATEFULLY... PULLING RANK...

CANCEL THIS PETERSON CONTRACT, ROY! IT'S NO GOOD! IT WON'T PAY!

IT IS GOOD! IT WILL PAY! NOW LISTEN, BUCK! ONCE AND FOR ALL, I'M NOT A HIRED HAND ON THE PAYROLL! I'M AN EQUAL PARTNER! UNDERSTAND?



ROY REMEMBERED HOW HE'D WARNED HIS BUSINESS ASSOCIATE...

I NEGOTIATED THAT CONTRACT MYSELF, BUCK, AND I'M SICK AND TIRED OF YOUR BULLYING ME. TRY IT ONCE MORE AND, SO HELP ME, I'LL PULL OUT OF THIS PARTNERSHIP!

GO AHEAD, ROY! ANYTIME YOU WANT TO CALL IT QUITS IS OKAY WITH ME! IF YOU CAN'T PLAY IT MY WAY, JUST SAY THE WORD! SOMEBODY'S GOT TO BE BOSS HERE AND RUN THINGS RIGHT!

AND ROY REMEMBERED HOW HE'D FUMED AND SNARLED INWARDLY, FINALLY COMING TO THE STARK REALIZATION...

SO THAT'S HIS GAME! HE'S TRYING TO MAKE IT SO MISERABLE FOR ME, I'LL PULL OUT AND LEAVE HIM TO HOG THE WHOLE BONANZA!

WELL, THIS GAME CAN BE PLAYED BOTH WAYS! OF COURSE! WHY ME? WHY NOT HIM? IF I CAN GET HIM TO PULL OUT... TURN THE TABLES... THE WHOLE DEAL WOULD BE MINE! BUT HOW? HOW COULD I GET RID OF HIM? I'VE GOT TO THINK OF A WAY...

AND SO, HIS ULCERIZED HATRED FOR HIS PARTNER HAD EATEN LIKE CAUSTIC INTO ROY'S SOUL, AND HE'D ELIMINATED ALL WAYS TO RID BUCKROY AIRLINES OF BUCK GORDON, ALL WAYS, THAT IS, EXCEPT ONE...

MURDER! I'VE GOT TO KILL HIM! IT'S THE ONLY WAY!

ROY REMEMBERED HOW HE'D STUDIED THE WALL MAP AND DECIDED...

THEY SAY THAT "MURDER WILL OUT"! A MURDER CAN NEVER STAY CONCEALED! SO... I WON'T CONCEAL IT! I'LL PLAY IT STRAIGHT... OUT IN THE OPEN! AND HERE'S WHERE THE LAW WORK I DID FOR THE FIRM PLUS MY WARTIME TRAINING PAYS OFF!

ROY'D ALWAYS HANDLED THE "DIRTY WORK" FOR THE AIRLINE... THE LAW CASES THAT HAD COME UP FROM TIME TO TIME. HE'D EVEN TAKEN LAW COURSES AT NIGHT TO HELP. NOW, HIS LAW WORK WOULD HELP HIM TO COMMIT MURDER... AND GET AWAY WITH IT...

THESE FOUR STATES... UTAH, ARIZONA, NEW MEXICO, AND COLORADO, ALL COME TOGETHER... HERE... AT ONE COMMON POINT. AND THAT'S IT! A FOUR STATE WRANGLE OVER ONE CERTAIN MURDER!

AND SO ROY'D PREPARED AND WAITED... AND HIS OPPORTUNITY'D COME ONE NIGHT, WHEN THE OFFICE HELP HAD GONE HOME AND BUCK WAS WORKING LATE, GETTING A NIGHT AIR FREIGHT SHIPMENT CHECKED OUT...

WHO'S THERE? OH, IT'S YOU, ROY! THOUGHT YOU WENT HOME WITH THE OTHERS. WELL, SCRAM... I'M BUSY!

STILL THE BOSS, EH, BUCK? STILL THE CAPTAIN ORDERING AROUND HIS CREW! WELL, MY DEAR BOSS CAPTAIN...

ROY REMEMBERED HOW HE'D RAISED THE MONKEY WRENCH... BRINGING IT DOWN ACROSS BUCK'S HEAD... CAREFULLY... EASY... NOT TOO HARD... NOT HARD ENOUGH TO KILL HIM... NOT YET...

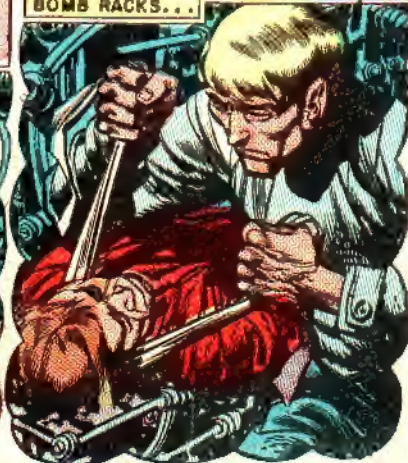
...THAT WAS YOUR LAST ORDER! YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE A LITTLE TRIP...

GNNNG

OUT INTO THE DARKNESS, ROY'D CARRIED BUCK'S UNCONSCIOUS FORM... INTO THE REAR DOOR OF THE HANGAR... TO THE SURPLUS B-29 THEY STILL USED FOR SHORT FREIGHT HAULS... SHORT NIGHT HAULS... LIKE THE ONE TONIGHT...

ALL LOADED UP... READY TO GO. NOBODY'LL CHECK THE CARGO HOLD NOW! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS SHIFT A FEW CRATES... AND I'M SET...

IT'D BEEN SO EASY... TYING BUCK UP, GAGGING HIM IN CASE HE'D COME TO, AND STRINGING HIM UP ONTO THE OLD BOMB RACKS...



...THEN STOWING THE OTHER ITEM... THE ITEM ROY'D BOUGHT AND RECONDITIONED PAINFULLY... THE SURPLUS BOMBSIGHT... INTO THE CLUTTERED NOSE OF THE OLD SUPERFORT...



...AND WAITING AROUND TILL THE GROUND CREW'D TRUNDLED THE OLD LADY OUT ONTO THE FIELD AND WARMED UP HER ENGINES. IT'D BEEN SO EASY TO BUMP INTO BATSON, THE PILOT...

SORTA BRINGS BACK OLD MEMORIES, THAT BABY! YOU KNOW, BATSON! I'D LIKE TO COME ALONG FOR A RIDE TONIGHT! OKAY WITH YOU?

WHY...UH... SURE THING, MR. DIXON! YOU'RE THE BOSS!



AND AS THEY'D SOARED WEST, IT'D BEEN SO EASY FOR ROY TO PRETEND A WAR HERO'S NOSTALGIA...

YOU KNOW, BATSON! IT'S JUST COME OVER ME! I'D LIKE TO MAKE LIKE A BOMBARDIER AGAIN... FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE. I'M GOING FORWARD... INTO THE NOSE. FOLLOW MY ORDERS ON THE INTERCOM... JUST LIKE YOU'RE MY PILOT AND WE'RE HEADED OVER BERLIN! AND STOP GRINNING!

I'M... I'M NOT GRINNING! MR. DIXON! I UNDERSTAND!

IT'D BEEN SO EASY TO UNCOVER THE BOMB-SIGHT AND PLUG IN THE LEADS HE'D WORKED ON FOR WEEKS... THE LEADS THAT CONTROLLED THE AILERONS... THE ELEVATORS... THE RUDDER... THE BOMB-BAYS... AND THE BOMB-RACKS... THE BOMB RUN!...

ALL RIGHT, BATSON! LET'S HEAD HER AROUND TO A READING OF THREE DEGREES SOUTH BY WEST...

BUT THAT'S OFF OUR COURSE, MR. DIXON!



NOT VERY MUCH OFF, BATSON. JUST PLAY ALONG AND HUMOR YOUR BOSS, HUH?

OKAY, MR. DIXON! IT'S YOUR GAS!

THE PROUD OLD GAL HAD TURNED SOUTHWEST AND ROY'D SAT GRIM AND TIGHT-LIPPED... MORE TENSE THAN HE'D EVER BEEN ON ANY MISSION OVER GERMANY. AND HE'D PLAYED IT LIKE A GAME...

BOMBARDIER TO PILOT! TAKE HER DOWN TO 1000 FEET. HEADING 2 DEGREES, SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST...

YES, SIR!

BUT IT'D BEEN NO IDLE GAME FOR ROY. IT'D BEEN A GAME OF DEATH. AND THE STAKES WERE HIGH. THIS HAD TO BE 'ON TARGET'... 'DIRECT HIT'... ON THE NOSE! BUT HE'D TIMED IT PERFECTLY! THE MOON HAD ILLUMINATED EVERYTHING BELOW...

TARGET SIGHTED! I'LL TAKE OVER, BATSON. BATSON. LET GO OF THE CONTROLS!

BUT, SIR...

THE BOMB BAYS HAD OPENED. BUCK'D LOOKED DOWN AND TRIED TO SCREAM BUT THE GAO HAD HELD. FINE CROSS HAIRS HAD MOVED SLOWLY TOGETHER. AND THEN...

BOMB AWAY!

...DOWN AND DOWN, THE HUMAN BOMB HAD HURTLED...

AND THE MEMORY FADED AS THE CONSTRICTION AROUND ROY'S THROAT EASED AND AIR RUSHED INTO HIS LUNGS IN GREAT SOBBING GULPS...

I...I'M ALIVE AGAIN! I'M NOT HANGING ANYMORE! THE NOOSE IS GONE! I...I WAS DREAMING AGAIN...

SUDDENLY, THERE WAS DARKNESS AGAIN FOR ROY...

NOW, WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHAT'S THIS HOOD DROPPING OVER MY HEAD? WHY AM I BEING PUSHED DOWN INTO THIS CHAIR? WHY ARE THEY STRAPPING ME IN IT? WHAT...WHAT...OH, LORD!

...AND ONCE AGAIN HE HEARD THE SAME HOODED EXECUTIONER'S VOICE...AS THE SWITCH WAS THROWN...

I SENTENCE YOU, ROY DIXON, TO DEATH BY ELECTROCUTION!

NO! OH, GOD! NO! IT'S THE ELECTRIC CHAIR!

THE FIRST JOLT RIPPED INTO ROY DIXON LIKE A MILLION WHITE-HOT NEEDLES...BOILING HIS BLOOD. HE COULD SMELL HIS OWN FLESH FRYING. THE SECOND JOLT SPIRALED HIM INTO A BLUE-WHITE FLASHING ABYSS THAT CHANGED INTO A PICTURE OF THE PAST...OF BUCK GORDON'S BODY SMASHING TO EARTH DIRECTLY UPON A LARGE FLAT STONE MARKER...

RIGHT ON TARGET...

YES, IT *HAD* BEEN 'RIGHT ON TARGET'. ROY'S PIN-POINT BOMBING HAD DROPPED BUCK JORDON ON THE STONE MARKER THAT DELINIATES THE *COMMON CORNERS* OF UTAH, COLORADO, ARIZONA, AND NEW MEXICO... STAINING IT RED WITH BLOOD AND RUPTURED FLESH...



IT HAD ALL GONE ACCORDING TO PLAN. ROY'D OPENLY AND BOLDLY PLEADED GUILTY TO THE GRAND JURY'S INDICTMENT. BUT THEN THE FUN HAD STARTED, AS THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COURTS OF FOUR STATES WRANGLING LIKE ALLEY-CATS OVER ONE MOUSE...

UTAH CLAIMS JURISDICTION IN THIS MURDER CASE

ARIZONA CLAIMS THE RIGHT TO TRY THE PRISONER!

NEW MEXICO...

COLORADO!

A LEGAL BRAWL HAD DEVELOPED. BUCK GORDON HAD MET HIS DEATH AT THE *FOUR MUTUAL CORNERS* OF THESE STATES. *EACH ONE* DEMANDED ITS RIGHT TO *PROSECUTE*, CLAIMING SOLE JURISDICTION. ROY'D BEEN ABLE TO HAVE HIMSELF RELEASED ON \$50,000 BAIL VIA A WRIT OF *HABEUS CORPUS*...

THIS'LL DRAG THROUGH COURT AFTER COURT. AT ANY DECISION TO TRY ME... I'LL *APPEAL*! THIS WILL GO ON FOR YEARS! I CAN APPEAL RIGHT UP TO THE *SUPREME COURT*!



AND ROY'D BEEN *RIGHT*! HIS PLAN HAD WORKED EXACTLY AS HE'D *PREDICTED* IT WOULD. THE RED TAPE HAD *PILED UP*, TANGLING INTO A THICKER AND MORE COMPLICATED KNOT...

FOUR STATES...*BICKERING*... *EACH* STUBBORN...*JEALOUS*...*PROUD*! THEY'LL *NEVER* BRING ME TO TRIAL... AT LEAST NOT IN *MY* LIFETIME!



THE MEMORY FADED. THE PAINFUL JOLTS OF ELECTRICITY WERE GONE. ROY LOOKED AROUND. IT WAS DAWN NOW...DAWN OVER A DESERT WASTELAND...

I...I'M *AWAKE* AGAIN! I *WASN'T* ELECTROCUTED! OH, GOD! WHAT'S *HAPPENING* TO ME? WHY AM I BEING *TORTURED* LIKE...LIKE...*NO*! WHAT AM I DOING *HERE*?



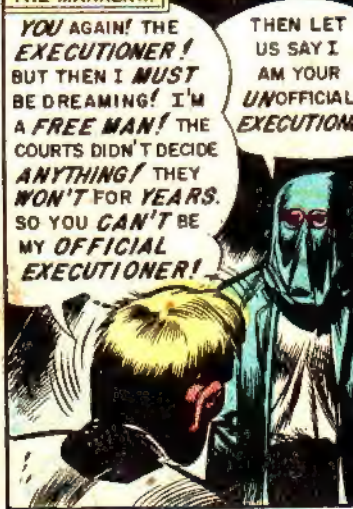
ROY LOOKED DOWN. HE WAS STANDING ON A FLAT ROCK... A MARKER... A FAMILIAR MARKER...



THIS IS WHERE BUCK'S BODY LANDED! I MUST BE DREAMING AGAIN!

NO, ROY DIXON! THIS IS NO DREAM!

THE HOODED FIGURE STOOD BESIDE THE MARKER...



YOU AGAIN! THE EXECUTIONER! BUT THEN I MUST BE DREAMING! I'M A FREE MAN! THE COURTS DIDN'T DECIDE ANYTHING! THEY WON'T FOR YEARS. SO YOU CAN'T BE MY OFFICIAL EXECUTIONER!

THEN LET US SAY I AM YOUR UNOFFICIAL EXECUTIONER!

THE HOODED FIGURE POINTED TO THE GREY WALLED STRUCTURE WITH THE LITTLE OBSERVATION WINDOW...



YOU ESCAPED LEGAL EXECUTION BY YOUR CUNNING PLAN, ROY! YOU ESCAPED THE GAS CHAMBER OF THAT STATE... SO I LET YOU DIE A LITTLE IN IT...

THE HOODED FIGURE SWEEPED HIS ARM...



YOU ESCAPED THE SCAFFOLD OF THAT STATE... SO I LET YOU TRY THAT ONE TOO...

...IN A CIRCLE...POINTING...



YOU ESCAPED THE ELECTRIC CHAIR OF THAT STATE... AND SO YOU'VE FELT WHAT IT IS TO DIE THAT WAY!

...POINTING TO THE LONG SHADOWS ON THE DAWN DESERT SAND...



AND NOW FOR THE LAST AND FINAL EXECUTION... THE ONE I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU JUST A 'TASTE' OF... THE FIRING SQUAD! READY...AIM...

NO! NO! THIS IS ALL SOME NIGHT-MARISH DREAM!

BUT THE EXECUTIONER REMOVED HIS HOOD...AND ROY SAW THAT THIS WAS NO DREAM...



...FIRE!

BUCK! BUCK GORD...NNN...

THE END

HEH, HEH! SO POOR OLD ROY GOT IT FROM BUCK... FOUR WAYS! WELL, YOU GET IT FROM E.C. FOUR WAYS WHEN YOU READ ONE OF YOUR GHOUL LUNATIC'S MAGS: FOUR CHILLING SCREAM-STORIES. NEXT COMES V.K. WITH HIS... THEN I'LL BE BACK TO RE-REVOLT YOU... AND O.W. WILL COMPLETE THE CREEPY QUARTET, SO READ ON



AND RETCH, DEAR FIEND. I'LL DIG YOU LATER! OH, BY THE WAY! HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB? YOU HAVE! OH! THEN YOU KNOW! 'BYE!

THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEM,HEM' AND A HORRIBLE 'HI' TO ALL YOU HORROR-HAPPY HIDIOTS! WELCOME NOW TO THE VAULT OF HORROR. THIS IS YOUR NARRATOR OF NAUSEATING NOVELETTES, THE VAULT-KEEPER, READY TO READ ANOTHER REVOLTING REGURGITATION FROM MY LIBRARY OF LECHEROUS LITERATURE. THIS TERROR-TONE, THIS CHOICE CHUNK OF CHILLING CHARNEL CHATTER IS APTLY ENTITLED...

COLD WAR

THERE WAS A BITING FROST IN THE LATE NOVEMBER NIGHT AIR WHICH HOVERED ABOUT THE LAST REMAINING FALL FLOWERS, BESTOWING ICY KISSES OF DEATH UPON THEIR SHRIVELING PETALS. THE LEAVES HAD LONG SINCE LEFT THE TREES, BARKING THEIR GNARLED TRUNKS TO THE COMING WINTER WINDS, UNCOVERING BRANCHES THAT REACHED SKYWARD LIKE TWISTED AND MISSHAPEN GOUT-WRACKED FINGERS. THERE, IN THAT GARDEN OF GLOOM, SAT THE WIFE AND THE LOVER, AND ON THE GREY COLD FLAGSTONE TERRACE STOOD THE HUSBAND, WATCHING... AND WAITING...

YOUR ARMS ARE LIKE ICE, MARIA. LET ME GET YOU YOUR WRAP, MY DARLING.

PLEASE, NORMAN. DO THAT I AM... COLD!



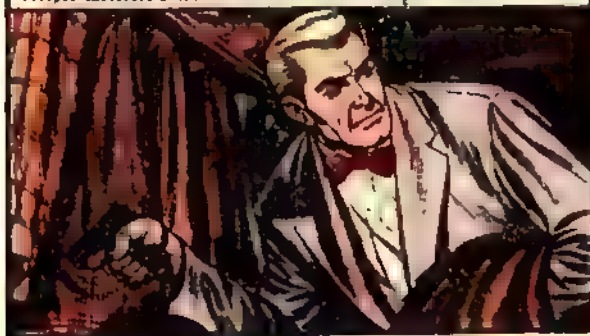
THE MOMENT NORMAN KING HAD MET MARIA HOLT AT THE PARTY GOING ON WITHIN THE HOUSE BEYOND, HE'D FALLEN IN LOVE WITH HER. HE'D WAITED TILL SHE WAS ALONE... THEN COAXED HER INTO THE GARDEN, BRAZENLY FLAUNTING HIS ATTENTIONS UPON HER IN FRONT OF HER STONE-FACED HUSBAND. NOW, AS NORMAN PASSED PAUL HOLT, HE NOTICED HIS CYNICAL SMILE...

YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME, MY FRIEND. MARIA WILL AMUSE HERSELF WITH YOU... AND SAVE HER LOVE FOR ME!

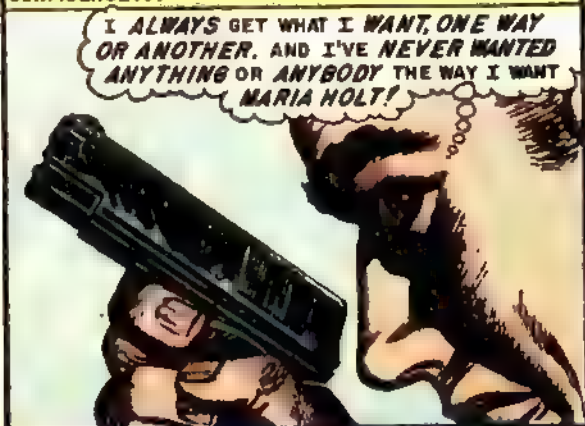
YOU'RE PRETTY SURE OF YOURSELF, HOLT! WELL, WE'LL SEE...



NORMAN HAD NOTICED THE COLD AND IMPASSIVE INDIFERENCE THAT HAD SEEMED TO BLANKET MARIA AND PAUL AND HE'D ASSUMED THAT THE PASSION-FIRES HAD COOLED FOR THEM. SO HE'D SET HIS SIGHTS UPON THE POOR UNHAPPY WIFE, DETERMINED TO STIR UP THE FLAMES WITHIN HER ONCE AGAIN... FOR HIM. HE GOT MORE THAN MARIA'S WRAP FROM THE CLOAKROOM...



HE FINGERED THE SNUB-NOSED BLUE-BLACK 38 AUTOMATIC HE'D TAKEN FROM HIS OVERCOAT, AND IT GAVE HIM CONFIDENCE...



WHEN NORMAN RETURNED TO THE GARDEN, PAUL WAS GONE...

NOW'S OUR CHANCE, MARIA. LET'S GO SOMEPLACE... ANYPLACE... JUST SO LONG AS IT'S AWAY FROM HERE! I WANT TO BE ALONE WITH YOU.

OH... I COULDN'T, NORMAN. PAUL WOULD WORRY! BESIDES, WE ARE ALONE OUT HERE, AREN'T WE?



NORMAN TOOK MARIA IN HIS ARMS... TRIED TO KISS HER...

DON'T TAUNT ME, MARIA. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. I'M MADLY, HELPLESSLY IN LOVE WITH YOU!

PLEASE, NORMAN! DON'T! PLEASE... YOU KNOW I'M MARRIED...



I HAVE EYES, MARIA! I CAN SEE! YOUR HUSBAND AND YOU ARE LIKE TWO STONES! THE LOVE THAT WAS ONCE BETWEEN YOU IS DEAD! WHAT IF YOU WEREN'T MARRIED?... IF YOU HAD NO HUSBAND? COULDN'T YOU CARE FOR ME?

WHAT'S THE USE IN SUPPOSING, NORMAN? I DO HAVE A HUSBAND...



SUDDENLY MARIA TURNED AND RAN TOWARDS THE HOUSE...

...AND THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT!

MARIA! COME BACK!



MARIA DISAPPEARED THROUGH THE FRENCH DOORS AS PAUL HOLT'S JEERING LAUGHTER RANG OUT FROM THE FAR END OF THE GARDEN...

YES, MR KING! THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT...

WHY YOU DIRTY, SNEAKING... YOU WERE HIDING THERE IN THE SHADOWS ALL THIS TIME... LISTENING!



NORMAN'S HAND WENT TO THE LOADED AUTOMATIC IN HIS POCKET AS THE SNEERING HUSBAND APPROACHED, AND HIS FACE FLUSHED RED WITH HATE AND ANGER AT THE AMUSED TWINKLE IN PAUL'S EYES...

SO YOU COULDN'T CHARM HER AWAY, KING! WHAT A PITY!

SHE SAID THERE WAS NO USE SUPPOSING, HOLT! SHE SAID THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO ABOUT YOU! WELL, THERE IS!



NORMAN WHIPPED OUT THE GUN, PRESSING THE COLD BLACK SNUB-NOSED MUZZLE AGAINST PAUL HOLT'S CHEST. THE SNEERING SMILE VANISHED FROM PAUL'S FACE...

THERE'S THIS I CAN DO! I CAN KILL YOU!

DON'T BE A FOOL, KING! BEFORE YOU PULL THAT TRIGGER, LET ME TELL YOU WHY IT WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD!



YOU'RE TRYING TO STALL ME TILL SOMEONE SEES US, HOLT. WELL, IT WON'T WORK!

NOBODY WILL COME OUT IN THIS COLD, KING! I MERELY WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT MARIA... AND ME... AND OUR ROMANCE. HOW IT BEGAN... EVERYTHING! BUT...



PAUL HOLT'S EYES NARROWED...

BUT, IF YOU'RE DETERMINED TO SHOOT, GO AHEAD!

ALL RIGHT! START TALKING, HOLT! BUT MAKE IT QUICK!



CURIOSITY HAD GOTTEN THE BETTER OF NORMAN. HE RELAXED A BIT AS PAUL BEGAN HIS STORY, BUT HE KEPT THE GUN MUZZLE LEVELED AGAINST PAUL'S CHEST...

IT'S A STRANGE AND FRIGHTENING STORY, NORMAN! IT BEGAN WHEN I FIRST SAW MARIA. IT WAS A LITTLE MORE THAN A YEAR AGO. SHE WAS SURROUNDED BY SKELETONS AND VAMPIRES AND WEREWOLVES...

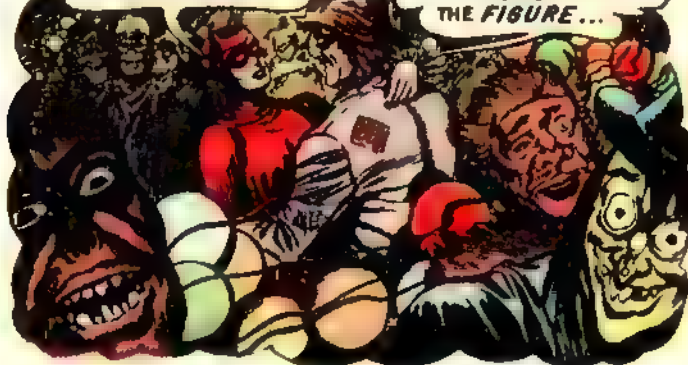
SKELETONS!? VAMPIRES? WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



'YOU SEE, I'D GONE TO VISIT SOME RICH FRIENDS IN PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI. THEY'D TAKEN ME TO A HALLOWE'EN MASQUERADE PARTY. MARIA WAS MADE UP AS A LITTLE SENSUOUS RED DEVIL. I CAME AS A SCARECROW. I WAS ATTRACTED TO HER THE MINUTE I SAW HER...

NO FAIR LIFTING MY MASK TILL AFTER MIDNIGHT!

BUT I'VE GOT TO SEE IF THE FACE MATCHES THE FIGURE...



'AT MIDNIGHT MARIA UNMASKED AND I UNMASKED AND WE LOOKED AT EACH OTHER AND KNEW. WE KNEW WHAT ANTHONY AND CLEOPATRA, AND ROMEO AND JULIET, AND ALL THE OTHER LOVERS DOWN THROUGH THE AGES KNEW...

MARIA!

PAUL!



'I TOOK HER BY THE HAND AND PULLED HER AFTER ME THROUGH THE SWIRLING CROWD OF MERRY MONSTERS. SHE LAUGHED AND IT WAS LIKE THE TINKLING OF SILVER BELLS...

PAUL...WHERE ARE YOU **TAKING ME**? STOP...

I'M GETTING YOU **OUT** OF HERE BEFORE ONE OF THESE **SHOULS** BEATS ME TO IT!

'OUTSIDE, MARIA STOPPED...SHIVERING. I LOOKED AT HER AND SHE WASN'T LAUGHING ANY MORE. FEAR LURKED IN HER EYES...

DON'T **TALK** ABOUT **SHOULS**, PAUL! I...I DON'T **LIKE** THEM. I...I'M **AFRAID**!

HUH? I...I...I'M **SORRY**, HONEY! I DIDN'T **MEAN**... I WOULDN'T...WELL, I'LL **NEVER** MENTION THEM **AGAIN**!



'I TOOK HER IN MY ARMS AND TRIED TO KISS HER RIGHT THEN AND THERE AS YOU JUST DID, NORMAN. BUT, AS WITH YOU, SHE'D HAVE NONE OF IT...

DON'T SAY **NO**, MARIA. THAT'S WHAT OUR LIPS WERE **MADE** FOR...

NOT **MINE**, PAUL! **NOT** YET! WE... WE DON'T **KNOW** EACH OTHER...

I'M PAUL HOLT, AND YOU'RE **BEAUTIFUL** AND NOW THAT WE **KNOW** EACH OTHER

IF YOU **INSIST** ON TRYING TO **KISS** ME, PAUL, I'LL **GO** BACK **IN-SIDE** AND YOU'LL **NEVER** SEE ME **AGAIN**!

'SO I DIDN'T TRY. I COULD WAIT, ALTHOUGH IT WASN'T EASY. THE NEXT EVENING, I TOOK HER TO DINNER. I TRIED TO HOLD HER HAND ACROSS THE TABLE, BUT SHE PULLED IT AWAY BEFORE I COULD TOUCH IT...

NOT EVEN **THAT**, MARIA?

IT WOULD **START** WITH **HOLDING** MY **HAND**... AND THEN A **KISS**...AND THEN...



IF YOU'RE **PLAYING** **HARD-TO-GET**, IT'S **WORKING**, MARIA. YOU'RE DRIVING ME **MAD**!

IF YOU'RE **IMPATIENT**, PAUL...THERE ARE **OTHER** GIRLS... **MUCH** **EASIER-TO-KISS** GIRLS. PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER **FORGET** ABOUT ME!

I'M **NOT** GOING TO **FORGET** ABOUT YOU, MARIA! I **COULDN'T**! I WANT YOU! I WANT YOU TO **MARRY** ME! THERE! I'VE SAID IT! **MARRY** ME, MARIA?

OH, PAUL! YES! YES, I'LL **MARRY** YOU... IF...IF MY **MOTHER** AND **FATHER** GIVE US **PERMISSION**! YOU'LL HAVE TO **ASK** THEM...



'MARIA AND HER PARENTS LIVED IN A LARGE OLD HOUSE OUTSIDE PORT-AU-PRINCE, WHEN I WENT TO SEE THEM THAT NIGHT, THEY SAT STIFFLY ACROSS A DRAWING ROOM THAT MUST HAVE BEEN FURNISHED IN 1880. THEIR ATTIRE FITTED THE SURROUNDINGS.'

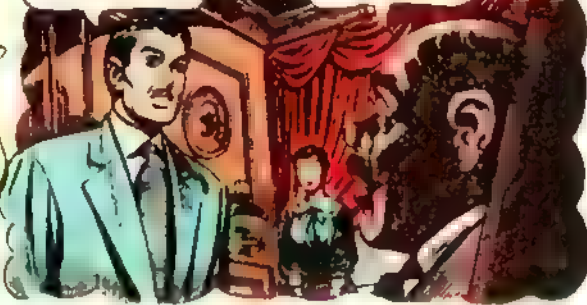
I'VE COME TO ASK FOR YOUR **PERMISSION** TO MARRY YOUR **DAUGHTER**, MR. AND MRS. HARMON!

INDEED, AND PRECISELY **WHAT ARE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS**, MR. HOLT?

'MY QUALIFICATIONS!? I HAD TO CONTROL MYSELF TO KEEP A STRAIGHT FACE. YOU'D THINK I WAS APPLYING FOR A POSITION INSTEAD OF ASKING TO MARRY THEIR DAUGHTER...'

WHY... I HAVE...QUIT A BIT OF **MONEY**, SIR...A GOOD **EDUCATION** MY OWN **BUSINESS**...

FINE, MR. HOLT, BUT **MORE IMPORTANT**...WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO **DIE** FOR MY DAUGHTER?



'EVEN HIS IDEAS OF GALLANTRY WERE VICTORIAN. I SUPPRESSED MY AMUSEMENT AND GAVE THE ANSWER HE WAS LOOKING FOR...'

'TO MY SURPRISE, MR. HARMON SAID WE COULD BE MARRIED THE VERY NEXT DAY. SO MARIA AND I WERE WED IN THAT COLD BLEAK CHAMBER BY A LOCAL OFFICIAL...'

'MR. HARMON GRINNED, BUT MARIA PERMITTED ME TO DO NO MORE THAN BRUSH HER COLD LIPS WITH MINE. I BLAMED IT ON SHYNESS BEFORE HER PARENTS. I ACHED TO CRUSH HER IN MY ARMS...'

I'D GIVE MY **LIFE** FOR MARIA WITH-OUT A **MOMENT'S HESITATION**, SIR!

AM' THEN YOU **HAVE** OUR **PERMISSION**, YOUNG MAN!

OH, PAUL. PAUL. I'M SO **HAPPY!**

I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU MAN AND WIFE!

NOW YOU MAY KISS YOUR BRIDE, SON!



'WHEN THE OFFICIAL THAT HAD MARRIED US HAD GONE, MARIA TURNED TO HER FATHER. MR. HARMON TOOK A SMALL SILVER CASE FROM HIS WAISTCOAT POCKET AND REMOVED A SINGLE WHITE TABLET.'

'MARIA LOOKED AT ME REASSURINGLY, AND WHISPERED...'

GIVE IT TO HIM, FATHER!

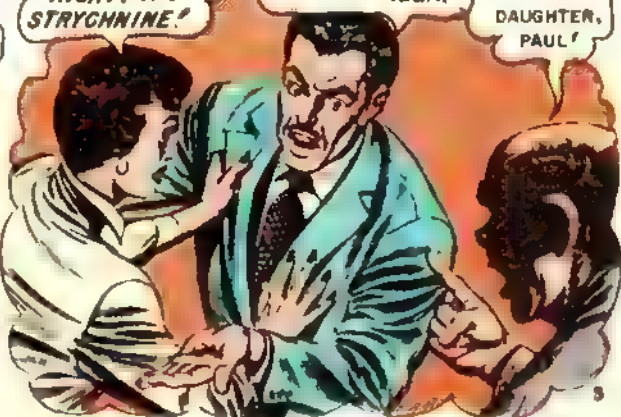
HERE, YOUNG MAN! **SWALLOW THIS!**

WHAT IS IT? IT SMELLS **FUNNY! MEDICINAL!**

SWALLOW IT, PAUL DARLING! IT'S **ALL RIGHT!** IT'S **STRYCHNINE!**

S-STRYCHNINE! WHY, THAT'S **POISON!** WHAT'S THE **IDEA?**

YOU SAID YOU'D **DIE** FOR MY DAUGHTER, PAUL!



'I DROPPED THE DEADLY LETHAL TABLET AND BACKED OFF. MARIA KNELT AND PICKED IT UP AND TRIED TO GIVE IT BACK TO ME. SHE PRESSED HER HAND IN MINE. HER FLESH WAS COLD... **GOLD AS DEATH...**

YOU SAID YOU'D **DIE** FOR ME, PAUL DEAR... **CHOKES!**
NOW YOU'VE **GOT TO!** OUR MARRIAGE CAN **NEVER** BE **CONSUMMATED** UNLESS YOU'RE LIKE **I AM...** LIKE **MOTHER AND FATHER...** UNLESS YOU'RE **DEAD!**



'A CLAMMY CHILL CREPT ACROSS ME LIKE AN INVISIBLE HAND OF HOARFROST. NUMBLY, I MOVED BACKWARDS. THERE WAS A LOOK OF DEADLY GRIM DETERMINATION ON THE FACES OF THE HARMONS AS THEY CAME SLOWLY AFTER ME...

THAT'S WHY I NEVER LET YOU **TOUCH ME OR KISS ME, PAUL!** YOU'D HAVE FELT MY **DEAD FLESH!** TAKE THE **PILL** SO YOU CAN BECOME **ONE OF US!** I **LOVE YOU!** I **WANT YOU!**

NO! OH, LORD, NO!



'I SCREAMED AND BROKE FOR THE DOOR...

ZOMBIES! I'VE MARRIED INTO A FAMILY OF ZOMBIES!



'THE DOOR WAS LOCKED... THE KEY GONE. I WHIRLED, CONFUSED. MY ONLY AVENUE OF ESCAPE WAS UP THE STAIRS...

PAUL! I **LOVE YOU!** I'VE GOT TO **HAVE YOU!** YOU'VE GOT TO **DIE** FOR ME TO **HAVE YOU!**

NO! NO!



'THE DOORS ON THE SECOND FLOOR WERE ALL LOCKED TOO. FOR A MOMENT, THEY TRAPPED ME THERE, THEIR COLD LIFELESS HANDS HOLDING ME IN A STEEL GRIP. BUT WITH A STRENGTH BORN OF SHEER TERROR, I WRENCHED FREE...

PLEASE, PAUL! PLEASE!

OH, LORD...



'THERE WAS NO TIME TO THINK ONLY TO RUN. I SAW THE NARROW STAIRWAY LEADING UPWARD AND WITH A WILD FRANTIC SCRAMBLE, I STUMBLED UP INTO A MUSTY DUST-LADEN FOUL-SMELLING ATTIC. I REACHED THE ONE WINDOW IN THE JUNK-CRAMMED ROOM, THREW IT OPEN, AND STARED DOWN THREE STORIES TO A BRICK PATIO. I GLANCED BACK AS I CLIMBED TO THE SILL AND SAW MY ZOMBIE WIFE AND IN-LAWS THROUGH A HAZE OF COBWEBS, COMING FOR ME... COMING... AND I HEARD MARIA'S PLEADING VOICE...

DON'T JUMP, PAUL! DON'T! YOU'LL CRUSH YOUR BODY. **BREAK BONES TEAR FLESH!** I WOULDN'T WANT YOU DEAD THAT WAY...



NORMAN KING LISTENED IN AMAZE-
MENT TO THIS TALE OF TERROR THAT
POURED FROM THE LIPS OF THE HUSB-
BAND OF THE WOMAN HE WANTED SO
DESPERATELY. HE LOOKED DOWN AT
THE GUN IN HIS HAND, THE GUN LEV-
ELED AT PAUL HOLT'S CHEST...

I GUESS... I GUESS I
LET THEM CATCH ME!
MARIA TALKED SENSE!
IT WAS NO USE JUMP-
ING! ONE WAY OR THE
OTHER...

WHAT
HAPPENED?



PAUL HOLT GRINNED WRYLY...

WHAT HAPPENED?!
WHY THEY KILLED
ME, OF COURSE!

THEY
KILLED...



SUDDENLY NORMAN HEARD PAUL'S
MOCKING LAUGHTER, SAW THE GLINT
OF AMUSEMENT IN HIS EYES. AND NOR-
MAN'S FACE FLUSHED SCARLET. HE
SEETHED WITH RAGE. HIS FINGER
TIGHTENED ON THE TRIGGER...

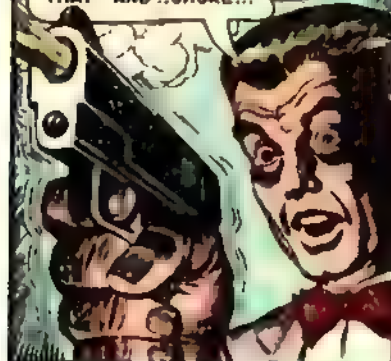
DO YOU THINK I'M A
FOOL, HOLT? DO YOU
THINK I'D BELIEVE
THAT ROT?

BELIEVE
WHAT YOU
LIKE,
NORMAN!



NORMAN SCREAMED IN FURY. HE SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER
AGAIN AND AGAIN AS HE SHRIEKED

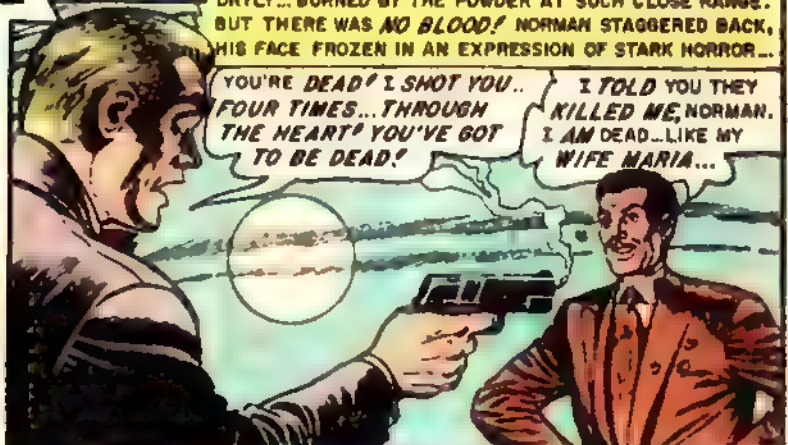
I SAID I'D KILL YOU!
AND I MEANT IT! TAKE
THAT... AND THAT... AND
THAT AND... CHOKE...



THE AUTOMATIC BARKED INTO THE NIGHT. FOUR UGLY
BLACK HOLES APPEARED IN PAUL'S CHEST. THEY GAPED
DRYLY... BURNED BY THE POWDER AT SUCH CLOSE RANGE.
BUT THERE WAS NO BLOOD! NORMAN STAGGERED BACK,
HIS FACE FROZEN IN AN EXPRESSION OF STARK HORROR...

YOU'RE DEAD! I SHOT YOU..
FOUR TIMES... THROUGH
THE HEART! YOU'VE GOT
TO BE DEAD!

I TOLD YOU THEY
KILLED ME, NORMAN.
I AM DEAD... LIKE MY
WIFE MARIA...



PAUL HOLT'S COLD LIFELESS HANDS CAUGHT NORMAN KING'S THROBBING
THROAT IN AN ICY DEATH-GRIP. HIS POWERFUL DEAD FINGERS CLAMPED
TIGHTLY, CUTTING OFF NORMAN'S AIR SUPPLY... CUTTING OFF HIS LIFE...

THEY MADE ME A ZOMBIE, NORMAN! AND NOW, IF
YOU WANT MY WIFE SO BADLY... I'LL HAVE TO MAKE
YOU ONE, AT LEAST... THEN, YOU MIGHT HAVE A
GHOST OF A CHANCE

S-O-N-N-K-K-K-K



HEH, HEH! AND THAT'S MY YELP YARN
FOR THIS ISSUE OF C.K.'S PUTRID PERI-
ODICAL. OF COURSE, THE CHOKER WAS ON
NORMAN... FALLING FOR A COLD BABE
LIKE MARIA. BUT EVERYTHING'S ALL
RIGHT NOW. NORMAN'S BEEN ACCEPTED
INTO ZOMBIE SOCIETY AND MARIA'S
PAWNED HIM OFF ON A DISTANT COUSIN
OF HERS. THIS GAL'S BEEN DEAD SO LONG,
SHE HAS TO KEEP HER DISTANCE. ANYWAY

NORMAN'S HAPPY AS AN
UNDERTAKER AT A
PLANE CRASH WITH
HER. SEEMS HE GOES
FOR THE STRONG
TYPE... SMELLING, THAT
IS. AND, TALKING ABOUT
STRONG SMELLING,
I'LL TURN YOU BACK
TO C.K.! BYE, NOW!





INSIDE STORY

They couldn't be far behind, Fitch realized. Of all the dumb luck . . . for years he'd snatched purses, and he'd never fumbled so badly as this time! His chest pounding as he rounded the corner, Fitch knew that his two pursuers would be closing in on him in another minute!

He skidded to a stop suddenly. In the empty lot to his right some kids were fooling around an old ice box, which sagged ludicrously atop a mound of rubbish. One punk sat inside the enamel box, while the others yammered, pretending they were about to shut the door. It took Fitch only a moment to see beauty in this sordid scene; the ice box was a better hideout than any other he'd find!

Fitch slammed one kid when he protested against an adult joining their fun . . . the others calmed down fast. Hunching over, Fitch pulled a five-spot from his pocket and the eyes around him grew big with anticipation. Fitch swiftly tore the bill into two pieces. He handed one half of the bill to the skinny kid nearest him. "I'm gonna duck into the ice box, see?" he whispered. "Slam that door shut after I'm in . . . then just keep on playing. You get the other half when you open the door for me!"

While the kids chattered excitedly, Fitch stepped into the box and maneuvered corkscrew fashion till he was able to squat down inside. "Okay!" he called. "When I rap on the side of the box, you open 'er up and get the other half of your reward! Now slam 'er closed!"

A tight fit, Fitch thought, a smile on his face. It was dark, and already the perspiration was beginning to swim down the small of his

back. But sitting it out in the ice box was a lot cosier than sweating out a prison sentence!

The air was stale and it was hard to breathe . . . but those cops'd pass by in another moment, and he'd hop out and make a getaway!

While he squatted inside the sealed box, two figures in blue raced around the corner. One of them pointed at the boys in the empty lot. At the same moment, the kids spotted the police. With a yelp of fear, the boys scattered, their legs thrashing frantically as they ran away. "T-They catch us here again," one boy grunted, "and they'll run us in! Last time they warned us to stay outa this lot, or we'd all go to jail!"

In another minute the boys were gone, and the police ran on. The lot was silent. Except for the deep-throated groaning inside the abandoned ice box.

After the footsteps died away outside, Fitch pounded on the enamel side of the box . . . pounded till blood from his slashed knuckles ran down the slick surface. With all his strength he hurled himself against the door, but it held firm.

It was growing hot in the box . . . increasingly hard to breathe. Fitch's fingers ripped his collar open, but it didn't help. There was a curious buzzing in his ears, and he found it painful to keep his eyes open. His heart was beating strangely in his chest, and the white-hot lump in his throat seemed to be growing . . . seemed to be filling his whole tortured body, as if it would soon burst. Just one breath of air, that's all he needed! Let the cops come and take him . . . let them throw him into solitary! Just let him gulp some air, and relieve the agony that was melting his insides! Air . . .



YOU, TOO, CAN MEET NEW FRIENDS! JOIN THE **E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!**

SEND FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP KIT TODAY RECEIVE A FULL-COLOR 7½ X 10½ ILLUMINATED CERTIFICATE, A 5" ROY WALLET IDENTIFICATION CARD, A SNAZZY EMBROIDERED SHOULDER PATCH, AND A STUNNING ANTIQUE BRONZE-FINISH BAS-RELIEF PIN.

FOR AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP, FILL OUT THE COUPON AND SEND IT IN, TOGETHER WITH 25¢. IF FIVE OR MORE OF YOU WISH TO JOIN AS AN AUTHORIZED CHAPTER, INDICATE EACH MEMBER'S NAME AND ADDRESS ALONG WITH 25¢ FOR EACH NAME, AND INDICATE THE NAME OF THE ELECTED CHAPTER PRESIDENT. WE WILL NOTIFY EACH PRESIDENT OF HIS CHAPTER NUMBER. EACH MEMBER CHAPTER OR INDIVIDUAL WILL RECEIVE HIS KIT DIRECTLY... BY RETURN MAIL!

THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB
ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE STREET
NEW YORK, 12, N.Y.

Here's my fan mail! I want the things and stuff like the kid's wearing! I want to meet new friends like the kid's meeting! I'm a fan-addict! I'm mad!

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ PHONE NO. _____
STATE _____

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Heh, heh! So everybody's "high fidelity" crazy these days! So who am I to stand in the way of progress? So snap on your ten watt all-triode amplifier, flip on your no-rumble, non-tracking-error, four-speed, sunk-in-sand record player with the diamond stylus variable reluctance magnetic plug-in pickup head, dust off your base-reflex cabinets with the infinite baffle containing the twin 15 inch woofers, 6 cross-over networks, and 8 matched-in-series tweeters . . . and lend a shattered ear to the crystal-clear needle scratch of these latest additions to the E.C. HORROR HIT PARADE (now irritating you at a flat response from 10 to 84,000 cycles, plus or minus .003 db. at maximum horsepower, minimum hum level at 3600 revolutions per minute!), as sent in by Frank Field of Port Washington, N. Y.; Carl Nelson and Dolores Zielinski of Detroit, Mich.; Rod Marano and Jerry Santabasi of Iselin, N. J.; 2 Allegany High School Ghouls of Cumberland, Md.; and Paul Block and Douglas Tuchman of Elmhurst, L. I.:

MAGGOTS GO WHERE MY PILED
GUTS GO
EAT ME IN ST. LOUIS, LOOEY
STRANGLINGS ARE HAPPENING
SOME HAIR OVER MY SLAIN BEAU
YOU MADE ME SHOVE YOU
I'LL BREAK YOUR BONES AGAIN,
KATHLEEN
COMIN' THROUGH THE EYE
DROWNED IN THE VALLEY
YOU WERE BENT FOR ME
SIOUX CITY SHREW
HAGS TO WITCHES
WHEN YOU AND I WERE YOUNG
MAGGOTS

Kevinsky O'Brien and Tom Olive of no address;
Steve Wisbart of Detroit, Mich.; William Gohl of
Philadelphia, Pa.; and Dom Porciolano of N. Y. C.
suggest the following PULSATING POGRAMS:

HATCHET SQUAD
ROAST OF THE TOWN
FOUR SCAR PLAYHOUSE
YOU BET YOUR WIFE
PERRY'S IN A COMA
MR. GIZZARD
T.V. SCREAM CLUB
SMILIN' ED'S FANG
THE PRONE STRANGER
I ATE THREE WIVES

Somebody sent in the following LURID LYRICS:

THE HEARSE WITH THE FRINGE ON TOP
from OKLAHOMACIDE

Rats and bats and owls better disperse
When I take you out in this hearse
When I take you out in the black hearse
With the fringe on top.
Watch that fringe and see how it flutters

As I drive the hearse through the gutters.
Crazy folks will break through their shutters
And their jaws will drop.
The driver's dead
The upholstery's skin
The dash-board'll drive you insane
With a solid glass bottom
You can look right in
In case you run over a pedestrian
Two bright fog-lights out on the fender
Spare tank of blood if you go on a bender
An unemployed mortician who'll service render
If you care to flop
In that terse little hearse
With the fringe on the top.

Al Fuller of Portland, Ore. pens this PERVERTED
PARODY to the tune of "Pretend":

Pretend you're drainin' when you're blue.
It isn't very hard to do.
And you'll find blood without an end
Whenever you pretend
Remember, anyone can dream.
And nothin's dry as it may seem.
The clots you haven't got could be a lot
If you pretend.
You'll find a body you can share,
One you can call all your own.
Just close your eyes, blood is there.
You'll never be alone
And if you sing this melody,
You'll be pretending just like me.
The blood is mine, it can be yours, my friend,
So why don't you pretend.

Clay Kimball of Draper, N. C. sends me flying with
this PUTRID POETRY:

I used to be happy with a narcotic fag,
Any old hag, and a drunken jag.
But now, no more,
For that was before.
I read an E.C. mag!
Now I'm sad and I pout
Till an issue comes out
They make me happy, men.
I EAT AGAIN!

COMMERCIALS: This offer expires with this offer!
Positively last public announcement! THREE DIMEN-
SIONAL E.C. CLASSICS and THREE DIMEN-
SIONAL TALES FROM THE CRYPT OF TERROR
... 15c each ... 2 for 30c! Subscriptions to TALES
FROM THE CRYPT ... one buck ... eight issues!
Address for more tomes of talent, or 3-D mags, or sub
orders to:

The Crypt-Keeper
Room 706, Dept. 42
225 Lafayette St.
N. Y. 12, N. Y.

HERE'S A TALE OF BLOODY T.V.
PROGRAMING! I CALL THIS DUD...

CLOTS MY LINE



THE BLINDING KLEIS LIGHTS BLAZED WHITE-HOT. THE RED SIGNAL ATOP THE KINESCOPE CAMERA BLINKED ON. GEARS AND CHAINS WITHIN THE CAMERA BEGAN TO WHIRR SOFTLY. ALL THE PREVIOUS BUSTLING AND MAD CONFUSION HAD SUDDENLY COME TO A MUSHED END. THE 'CANNED' T.V. PROGRAM BEGAN, USHERED ONTO TAPE TO BE USED AT SOME FUTURE DATE, BY THE UNCTUOUS, SUAVE VOICE OF ITS MASTER-OF-CEREMONIES, ANTON CHATFIELD...

GOOD EVENING, FRIENDS. WELCOME TO OUR NETWORK'S **NEWEST GAME...**
'GUESS THE GUEST' A UNIQUE QUIZ GAME IN WHICH OUR PANEL
WILL ATTEMPT TO GUESS THE **OCCUPATION** OF OUR **INVITED GUEST...**



MR. PIERCE DRAYNOR SAT BESIDE THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES, SMILING NERVOUSLY. FROM TIME TO TIME HE GLANCED AT THE PANEL SITTING STERNLY ACROSS THE SMALL STUDIO STAGE...

IF OUR PANEL **FAILS** TO NAME THE GUEST'S SECRET OCCUPATION WITHIN THE TIME LIMIT, HE RECEIVES A **VALUABLE PRIZE...**



MR. CHATFIELD NODDED TOWARD THE GLUM THREESOME OPPOSITE...

OUR PANEL IS **NEW** EACH WEEK. **GUESS THE GUEST** IS **NOT** A **CELEBRITY** PROGRAM. WE BELIEVE IT IS MORE FUN TO HAVE THREE...WELL...**AVERAGE** PEOPLE LIKE **YOURSELVES** MATCH WITS WITH OUR GUEST. TONIGHT, ON OUR PANEL, WE HAVE MR. **RALPH PETERS**, NIGHT WATCHMAN... MISS **CELIA PRONICK**, MOVIE CASHIER... AND MR. **PAUL DUNKEL**, MAINTENANCE MAN...



NOW, PANEL, MEET OUR GUEST... MR. PIERCE DRAYNOR. YOUR JOB WILL BE TO **DISCOVER** MR. DRAYNOR'S **OCCUPATION**... WHAT HE **DOES!** IN OTHER WORDS... **GUESS THE GUEST!** FIRST, WE'LL BEGIN WITH THE **WILD GUESSES!** MISS PRONICK?



MR PIERCE DRAYNOR SAT IN THE GUEST SEAT WITH AN AMUSED SMILE, GLOATING INSIDE. THEY'D NEVER GUESS HIS OCCUPATION. IT WAS SOMETHING THEY WOULDN'T EXPECT. JUST TO LOOK AT HIM...



HIS NEAT OUTER APPEARANCE... HIS QUIET VOICE... HIS RATHER MEAK AIR... THERE WAS NOTHING OBVIOUS ABOUT MR DRAYNOR THAT WOULD GIVE HIS OCCUPATION AWAY. MR DRAYNOR WAS GOING TO ENJOY THIS...



THEY WERE ALL WRONG... SO VERY WRONG. MR. DRAYNOR LEERED SLYLY AT THE HUMMING KINESCOPE CAMERA, MOCKING THE VAST AUDIENCE THAT WOULD VIEW THIS AT SOME FUTURE TIME. AND HE REMEMBERED HOW HE'D MET MR. CHATFIELD THAT NIGHT LAST WEEK... IN THAT CRUMMY LITTLE EAST-SIDE GIN MILL...

YOU ARE?? WHY, I'M AN **M.C.** ON A NEW **T.V. PROGRAM!** ER... HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO **APPEAR**, MR. DRAYNOR? IT'S CALLED **'GUESS THE GUEST.'** I'M SURE THAT YOUR **OCCUPATION** WOULD **FLOOR** OUR EXPERTS...

I'VE NEVER BEEN ON T.V. WHAT'S IT LIKE? I MEAN THE PROGRAM?



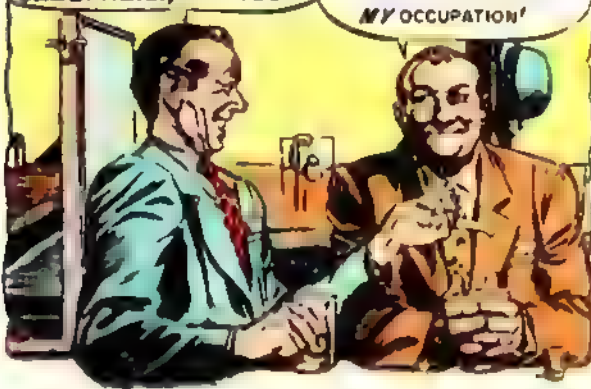
WELL, **'GUESS THE GUEST'** IS A **PANEL PROGRAM**, MR. DRAYNOR. OUR PANEL HAS TO GUESS YOUR **OCCUPATION**. WE **KINESCOPE** IT! YOU KNOW... PUT IT ON **TAPE** FOR A **FUTURE REBROADCAST** OVER OUR NETWORK.

OH, I **SEE!** BECAUSE I'M VERY **NERVOUS** BEFORE AN **AUDIENCE**...



OH, THERE'S **NO STUDIO AUDIENCE** AT A **KINESCOPE TAKE**, MR. DRAYNOR. JUST THE **PANEL, MYSELF, THE CAMERAMAN**, AND... **YOU!**

THEN I'LL **ACCEPT** YOUR INVITATION, MR. CHATFIELD. I'D **LOVE** TO HAVE YOUR **CLEVER PANEL** TRY TO GUESS MY **OCCUPATION!**

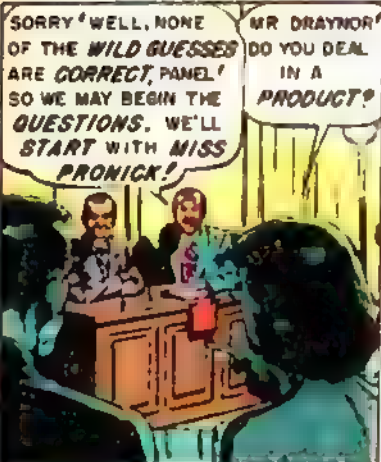


GOOD! JUST LET ME CHECK MY **SCHEDULES!** YES! **FINE!** WE'LL **'TAKE' YOU** NEXT **TUESDAY NIGHT** AT **10 30 PM**. HERE'S THE **ADDRESS**, YOU'RE **SURE** YOU'LL **COME?**

OH, I'LL **BE THERE**, MR. CHATFIELD. I WOULDN'T **MISS THIS** FOR ANYTHING.



MR. DRAYNOR'S THOUGHTS RETURNED TO THE PRESENT AS MR. CHATFIELD SMILED.



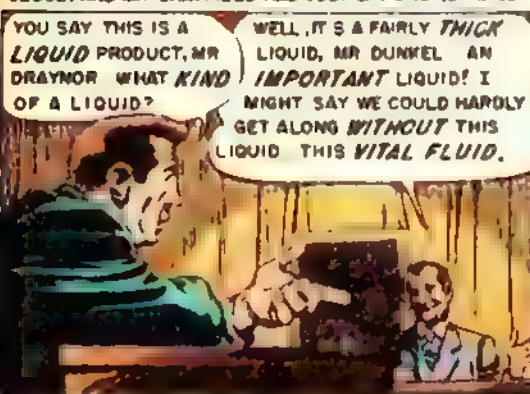
THE QUESTIONS BEGAN INNOCENTLY ENOUGH...*TOO* INNOCENT. MR. DRAYNOR IMPATIENTLY EGGED THEM ON. MR. CHATFIELD SEEMED TO BE ENJOYING THE PROCEEDINGS...



MR. CHATFIELD HAD TOLD MR. DRAYNOR HE COULD AD LIB OR EMBELISH HIS YES-OR-NO ANSWERS IF HE CARED TO, SO LONG AS HE DID NOT DELIBERATELY LIE. THAT WAS ALL RIGHT WITH MR. DRAYNOR...



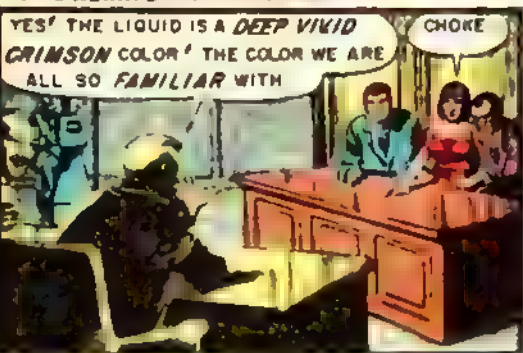
THEY PASSED FROM ONE TO THE OTHER, NARROWING IT DOWN, GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER. MR. DRAYNOR HAD HELPED THEM ALONG, SNICKERING TO HIMSELF. HE'D WANTED THEM TO GET CLOSE...VERY CLOSE. AND MR. CHATFIELD HAD JUST SAT BACK, SMILING.



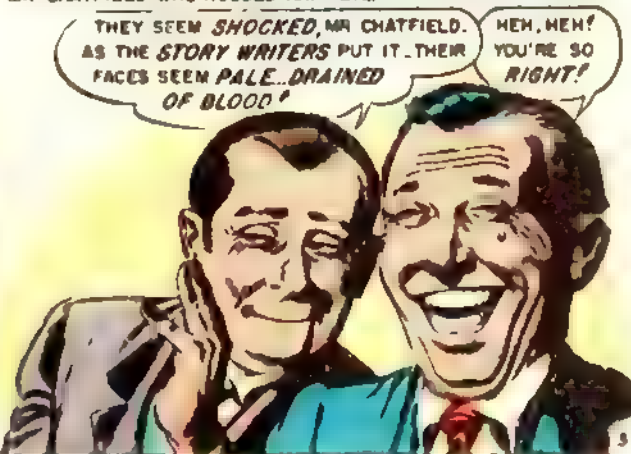
MR. DRAYNOR SAW THE SUDDEN TWITCH OF MISS PRONICK'S LIPS NOW AS A CLUE LEAPED INTO HER MIND AND HER EYES WIDENED IN HORROR. MR. DUNKEL PASSED TO HER. HER VOICE WAS HESITANT, FEARFUL.



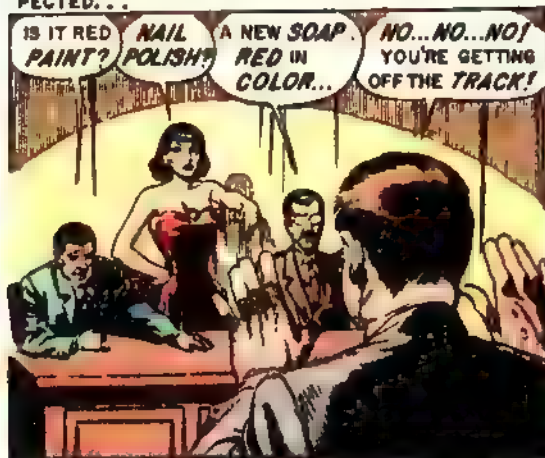
THEY LEANED FORWARD, HANGING ON HIS ANSWER, BREATHLESSLY, DRAMATICALLY. DRAYNOR HESITATED DELIBERATELY. HE LOOKED TO MR. CHATFIELD, WHO SEEMED TO BE ENJOYING THE UNCOMFORTABLE TURN THE QUIZ HAD TAKEN. MR. DRAYNOR LICKED HIS LIPS, BEING CAREFUL TO KEEP THEM CAREFULLY CLOSED AS HE ALWAYS DID IN PUBLIC.



THE PANEL GASPED IN UNISON, EXCHANGING STARTLED GLANCES. DRAYNOR CHUCKLED SOFTLY, WHISPERING THAT OLD CLICHE TO MR. CHATFIELD WHO NODDED HAPPILY...



DESPERATELY THEY HURLED QUESTIONS AT HIM, HOPING THEY WERE WRONG AT WHAT THEY SUSPECTED...



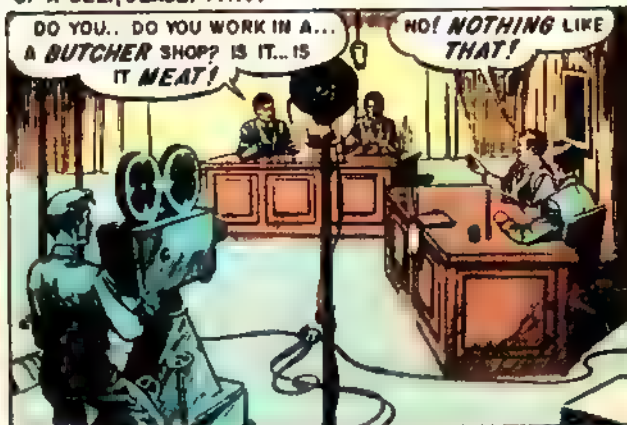
PETERS SEEMED TO BE MENTALLY GAGGED, EVADING THE DIRECT QUESTION LIKE SOME HORRIBLE SLIME LYING BEFORE HIM...



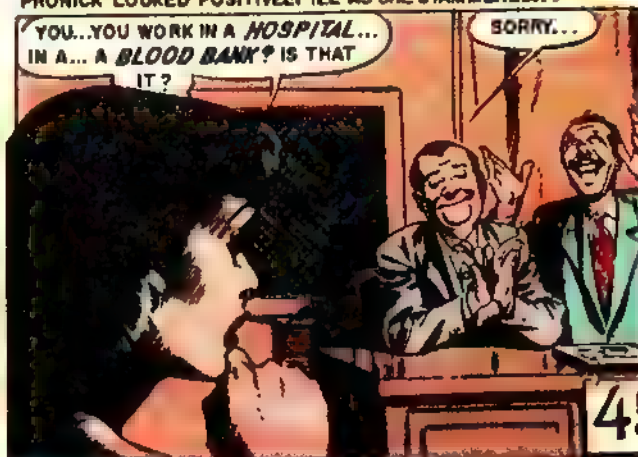
THE GRINNING, GLOATING GUEST CHOSE HIS WORDS CAREFULLY, FOR THEIR FULLEST AND MOST TANTALIZING MEANING. IT WAS SO DELIGHTFUL, WATCHING THE PANEL SWEAT AND SQUIRM.



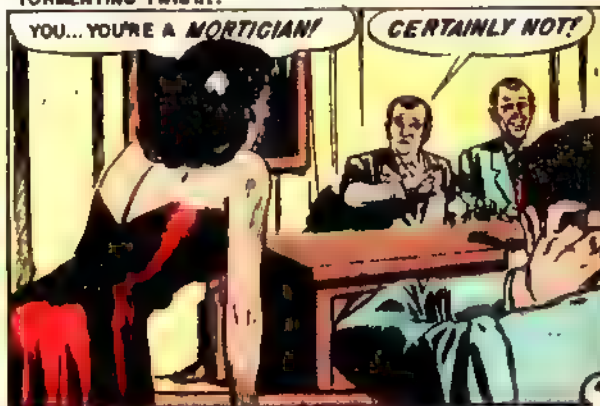
IT WAS DUNKEL'S TURN AGAIN, BUT HE WAS STILL AFRAID TO COME OUT WITH IT OPENLY. HE TRIED TO APPROACH IT IN A ROUNDABOUT WAY, LIKE A FEARFUL MAN SKIRTING THE EDGE OF A DEEP, DEADLY PIT...



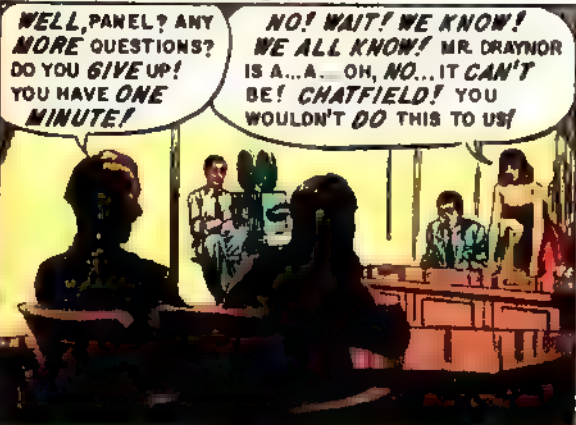
THEY WERE ALL BEATING AROUND THE BUSH, AFRAID TO NAME THE HIDEOUS OCCUPATION TORTURING THEIR MINDS. MISS PRONICK LOOKED POSITIVELY ILL AS SHE STAMMERED...



MR. CHATFIELD'S EYES GLEAMED AS HE WARNED THE PANEL OF THE FLEETING TIME. IT WAS THE TRIUMPH HE'D PLANNED ALL ALONG. THAT'S WHY HE'D INVITED MR DRAYNOR AT NIGHT. IT ALL FIT IN SO NICELY. QUITE A LOVELY TORMENTING TWIST...



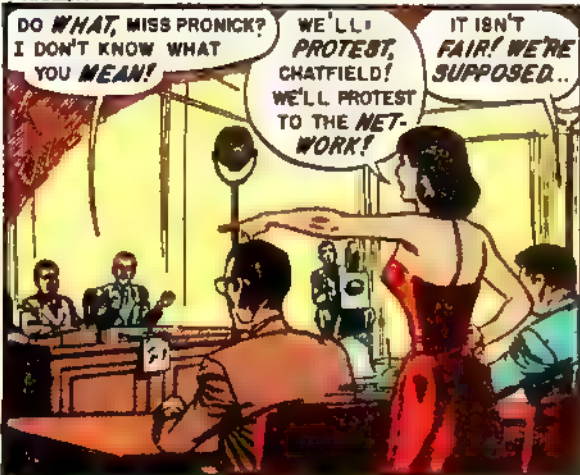
THE PANEL SHRUNK NOW AS DRAYNOR LEERED AT THEM, MOCKING THEM...DEFYING THEM...DARING THEM TO PIN HIM DOWN. MR.CHATFIELD SAT BACK, WONDERING IF THEY'D HAVE THE NERVE...



WELL, PANEL? ANY MORE QUESTIONS? DO YOU GIVE UP! YOU HAVE ONE MINUTE!

NO! WAIT! WE KNOW! WE ALL KNOW! MR. DRAYNOR IS A...A... OH, NO...IT CAN'T BE! CHATFIELD! YOU WOULDN'T DO THIS TO US!

MR. DRAYNOR GIGGLED. MR. CHATFIELD LOOKED SURPRISED...



DO WHAT, MISS PRONICK? I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN!

WE'LL PROTEST, CHATFIELD! WE'LL PROTEST TO THE NETWORK!

IT ISN'T FAIR! WE'RE SUPPOSED...

MR. CHATFIELD LAUGHED...

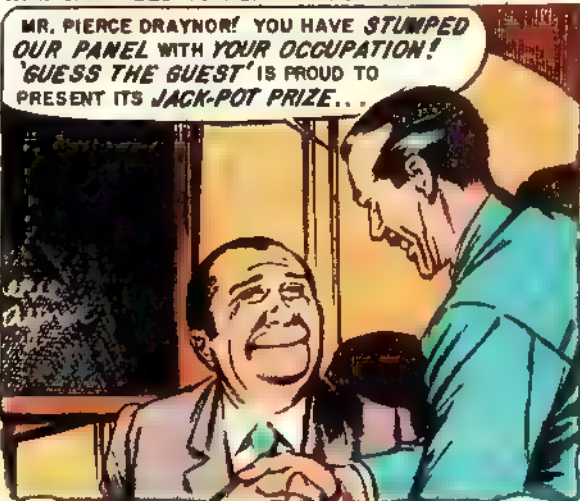


THIS MAN HAS A LEGITIMATE OCCUPATION! IF YOU CAN'T GUESS IT, HE WINS! NOW, DO YOU CARE TO MAKE A STAB AT IT?

NO! A DIRTY TRICK!

YOU'LL HEAR ABOUT THIS!

MR. CHATFIELD TURNED TO MR. DRAYNOR...

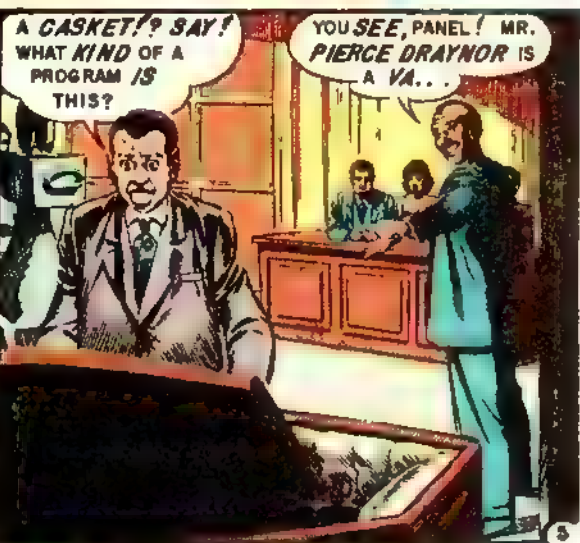


MR. PIERCE DRAYNOR! YOU HAVE STUMPED OUR PANEL WITH YOUR OCCUPATION! 'GUESS THE GUEST' IS PROUD TO PRESENT ITS JACK-POT PRIZE...



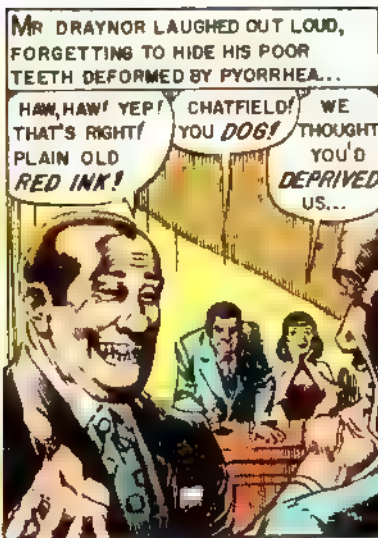
...THIS SOLID OAK, HAND HEWN, NYLON LINED, BRASS NAILED GASKET...FOR YOU TO REST IN ETERNAL REPOSE FOREVERMORE...

GULP...



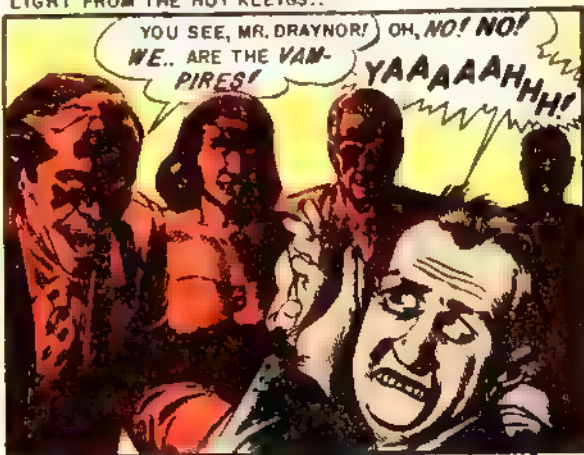
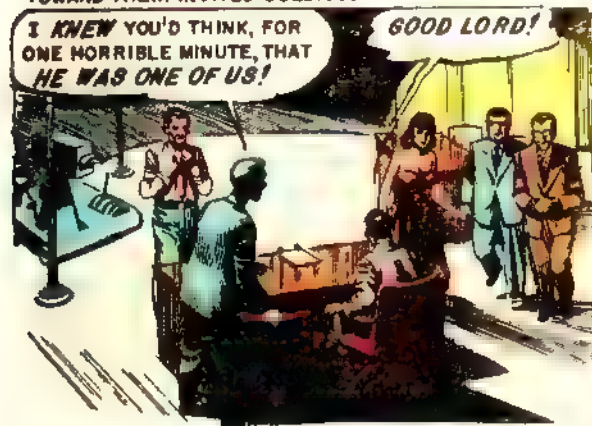
A GASKET!? SAY! WHAT KIND OF A PROGRAM IS THIS?

YOU SEE, PANEL! MR. PIERCE DRAYNOR IS A VA...

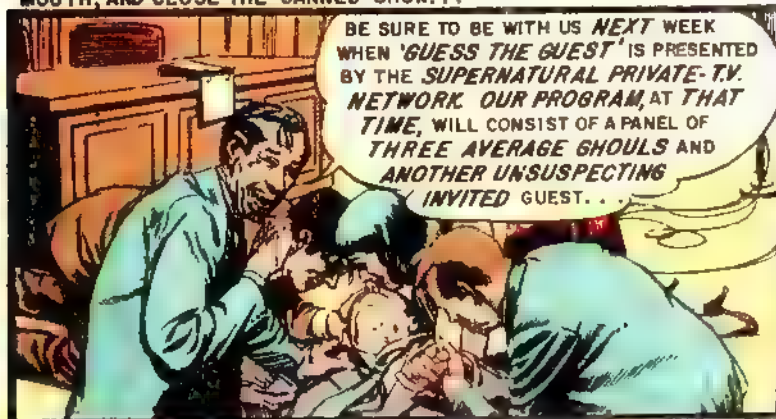


CHATFIELD ROSE, STANDING OVER DRAYNOR. AND THE CAMERAMAN, TOO, LEFT HIS WHIRRING MECHANISM TO JOIN THE DROOLING PANEL MEMBERS AS THEY GLIDED TOWARD THEIR INVITED GUEST...

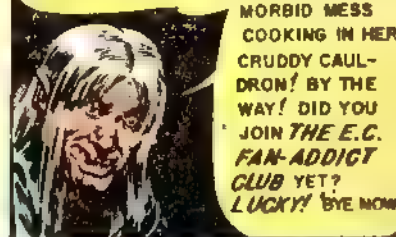
THEY LOOMED OVER THE INK MANUFACTURER, HEMMING HIM IN, THEIR SHARP FANGS GLISTENING IN THE WHITE LIGHT FROM THE HOT KLEIGS...



MR. DRAYNOR FLAILED AS THEY BENT OVER HIM, SINKING THEIR NEEDLE-SHARP FANGS INTO HIS FLESH... SUCKING... GULPING... DRAWING THE SCARLET LIFE-FLUID FROM HIS WEAKENING BODY. AND JUST BEFORE THE DARKNESS CLOSED IN, DRAYNOR HEARD MR. CHATFIELD RISE, WIPE HIS BLOODY MOUTH, AND CLOSE THE 'CANNED' SHOW...



HEH, HEH! GUTE IDEA, EH, KIDDIES... HAVING A PRIVATE-TV. NETWORK FOR THE GRAVEYARD GALLERY? OF COURSE, IT'S BROADCAST OVER U.H.F. THAT'S ULTRA-HORRIBLE FREQUENCIES! IN COLOR, TOO! ALL PRETTY FLESH-CRIMSON AND BLOOD-RED! AS FOR POOR MR. DRAYNOR... WELL, HE GOT TO USE THE PRIZE HE'D WON! SOONER THAN HE EXPECTED, TOO! AND NOW, THE OLD WITCH AWAITS WITH HER



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! AND NOW, IT'S *DELIRIUM DESSERT* TIME IN C.K.'S MORBID MUCK-MAG... AND YOUR *SHUDDER - JERK*, YOUR *FESTERING FRAPPE-FEEDER*, YOUR *SORDID SUNDAY-SLOPPER*, THE OLD WITCH, IS READY TO DISH OUT HER LATEST COOL CAULDRON CONCOCTION... A DELIGHTFULLY ENJOYABLE TALE OF EVIL EMBROIDERY AND CREEPY CROCHETING AND NAUSEATING KNITTING WHICH I CALL...

ACCIDENTS and OLD LACE

THE STILL NIGHT OUTSIDE THE BOARDING HOUSE WAS SUDDENLY SHATTERED BY THE SICKENING IMPACT OF TWO TONS OF METAL AND RUBBER AND GLASS AND FLESH MEETING A SOLID WALL OF BRICK AND CONCRETE. THE PAINFUL SQUEALING OF BRAKES PRECEDING THE CRASH STILL ECHOED INTO THE NIGHT AS THE ROOMERS POURED OUT ONTO THE PORCH AND DOWN THE WOODEN STEPS. ERIC HOLBIEN JOINED THEM AS THEY RUSHED TO THE MASS OF TWISTED FENDERS AND PULVERIZED WINDOWS, TORN MUSCLES AND SHATTERED BONE, AND THICK BLOOD THAT OOZED FROM THE WRECK AND POOLED LIKE A SCARLET LAKE UPON THE COLD SIDEWALK...



ERIC HOLBIEN STOOD BEHIND THE THREE OLD LADIES THAT SHARED THE HUGE ROOM NEXT DOOR TO HIS. HE WATCHED WITH SATISFACTION AS THEIR MOUTHS DROPPED OPEN DUMBLY AND THEIR EYES GLAZED IN HORROR AND THE COLOR DRAINED FROM THEIR AGED AND WRINKLED FACES AS THEY BEHELD THE DEATH SCENE. AND ERIC HOLBIEN SMILED...



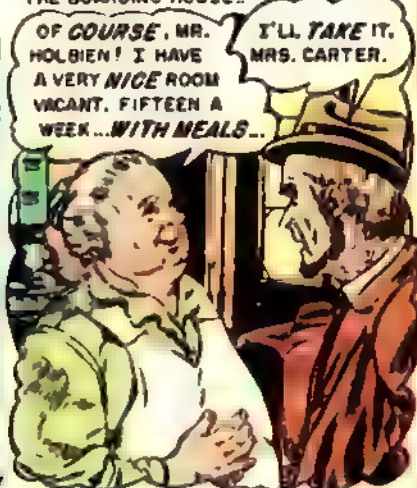
HE WATCHED THEM TURN IN DREAD AND REVULSION AND SCURRY LIKE DRY LEAVES OVER THE BOARDING HOUSE LAWN TO THE SAFETY AND SANCTITY OF THE IMPOSING STRUCTURE THAT HAD BEEN THEIR HOME FOR THE PAST TWELVE YEARS...



AND HE KNEW THAT SOON HE WOULD HAVE ANOTHER FABULOUS TAPESTRY TO SELL TO HIS FRIEND, MILTON... A TAPESTRY WOVEN FEVERISHLY BY THREE PAIRS OF GNARLED AND NERVOUS HANDS GUIDED BY THREE PAIRS OF MILKY BLOODSHOT EYES THAT HAD LOOKED UPON THE HORROR OF VIOLENT ACCIDENTAL DEATH...



AS THE HASTILY SUMMONED AMBULANCE SCREAMED UP TO THE CRASH SCENE IN ITS USELESS MERCY TRIP, ERIC HOLBIEN EASED HIMSELF INTO A RICKETY PORCH ROCKER AND THOUGHT BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF ALL THIS... TO THAT VERY FIRST DAY HE'D COME TO THE BOARDING HOUSE...



OF COURSE, MR. HOLBIEN! I HAVE A VERY NICE ROOM VACANT. FIFTEEN A WEEK...WITH MEALS...

I'LL TAKE IT, MRS. CARTER.

ERIC HAD BEEN AN ART DEALER BACK IN NEW YORK. HE'D HAD A SMALL GALLERY BUT IT HAD NEVER BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL. THE ARTISTS THAT HAD COME TO HIM WITH THEIR CANVASES AND SCULPTURINGS HAD NOT BEEN TOO GOOD. HE'D BEEN FORCED TO CLOSE THE GALLERY AFTER A WHILE. PEOPLE HAD STOPPED COMING TO BUY...

SO ERIC HAD COME TO MILLVILLE TO BEGIN AGAIN. HE'D HAD NOTHING SPECIFIC IN MIND. HE'D JUST PACKED HIS THINGS IN NEW YORK AND TAKEN A TRAIN WEST. AND WHEN HE'D BECOME TIRED OF RIDING, HE'D GOTTEN OFF... AND IT'D BEEN AT MILLVILLE...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE A NEW ADDITION TO OUR LITTLE FAMILY! THIS IS MR. ERIC HOLBIEN...

YOU'RE JUST IN TIME FOR DINNER, MR. HOLBIEN!

OH, I'M SORRY! THIS IS GRACE...AND CHARLOTTE...AND EMMA LOU SALSBUARY, THEY LIVE IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR TO YOURS...

HOW DO YOU DO, LADIES?



ERIC HAD NODDED ABSENTLY TO THE THREE OLD LADIES AND PICKED AT HIS FOOD. HIS THOUGHTS A MILLION MILES AWAY. WHAT COULD HE DO NOW THAT HE'D COME TO MILLVILLE? HOW LONG COULD HE LAST UNTIL HIS MONEY RAN OUT?...

GRACE! CHARLOTTE! EMMA LOU! DID YOU HEAR? MR. HOLBIEN IS AN ART DEALER. YOU MUST SHOW HIM YOUR TAPESTRIES!

OH, MR. HOLBIEN WOULDN'T BE INTERESTED, JANET!

WHAT DO YOU DO, MR. HOLBIEN? I MEAN, WHAT BUSINESS ARE YOU IN?

WHY...I...I USED TO BE AN ART DEALER, MRS. CARTER!

TAPESTRIES? WHY, I...



THE GIRLS ARE SHY, MR. HOLDIEN. THEY WEAVE WONDERFUL TAPESTRIES. AFTER DINNER, YOU MUST SEE THEM

I'D I'D BE DELIGHTED.

HE'D AGREED TO LOOK AT THE SALSBURY SISTERS' WORK MERELY AS A CONCESSION... TO AVOID INSULTING THEM. AND THE ONE THEY'D SHOWN HIM HAD BEEN JUST WHAT HE'D EXPECTED

IT'S VERY PRETTY! FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP! GOOD COLOR! ER... AH...

IS IT WORTH ANYTHING, MR. HOLDIEN?

BUT THEN, HE'D SPIED THE TAPESTRY THAT HAD BEEN ROLLED UP AND ALMOST HIDDEN FROM VIEW AND HE'D ABSENTLY TAKEN IT OUT OF THE CLOSET AND SPREAD IT OPEN...

I REALLY CAN'T SAY, MRS. CARTER. TAPESTRIES LIKE THAT ARE... ARE... WHO MADE THIS?

GRACE? OH, DEAR!

THE SALSBURY SISTERS HAD SNATCHED THE TAPESTRY FROM ERIC AND ROLLED IT UP AGAIN, APOLOGIZING...

THIS ONE'S NOT A VERY GOOD EXAMPLE OF OUR WORK!

NO GOOD AT ALL!

WE INTENDED TO DESTROY IT!

NO!

BUT THE BRIEF VIEW HE'D HAD OF IT HAD BEEN ENOUGH. ERIC HOLDIEN HAD WAITED ALL HIS LIFE FOR THAT MOMENT...

WHEN DID YOU MAKE THAT ONE? THAT ONE IS GOOD! THAT TAPESTRY IS A WORK OF ART... AN EXPRESSION OF SHEER GENIUS...

THIS...?

THIS ONE?

SHEEPSHLY, THE SISTERS HAD UNROLLED THE TAPESTRY AGAIN. ERIC'S HEART HAD RACED IN HIS CHEST. HIS EYES HAD MOVED SLOWLY OVER THE MINUTE STITCHES... THE DREARY SOMBER COLORS... THE EMOTIONAL SWIRLING COMPOSITION. HE'D REACHED OUT, AS IN A DREAM, AND TOUCHED HIS DREAM, AND HIS DREAM HAD BEEN REAL.

THIS... IS ART! THIS... IS GOOD!

WE WE MADE THAT WHEN MR. GOLDEN WAS KILLED! REMEMBER, GIRLS?

YES, THAT'S IT! I REMEMBER.

HE WAS HIT BY A CAR...

...DOWN BY THE CORNER!

WE SAW THE WHOLE THING! IT WAS AWFUL! THE BLOOD! THE TWISTED BODY POOR MR. GOLDEN! WE MADE THIS THAT VERY NIGHT!

YES THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF IT ERIC HAD TAKEN THE TAPESTRY TO NEW YORK.. TO AN ART DEALER FRIEND OF HIS...JUST TO CHECK ON HIS OWN JUDGEMENT...

THIS IS GOOD, ERIC! WHO DID IT? CAN YOU GET MORE? EXCELLENT! SUCH EXPRESSION... SUCH EMOTION!

HOW MUCH IS IT WORTH, MILTON?

I'LL GIVE YOU FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR IT!

AND IF I CAN GET MORE FOR YOU?

I'M SURE I'LL BE ABLE TO SELL THEM TO THIS PARTY I HAVE IN MIND. I'LL BUY ALL YOU CAN GET... IF THEY'RE AS GOOD AS THIS ONE... FOR FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS EACH!

IT'S A DEAL, MILTON! WRITE OUT A CHECK! AND I'LL BE BACK SOON... WITH OTHERS!

SO ERIC HAD GONE BACK AND TOLD THE SISTERS

FIFTY DOLLARS! OH, DEAR! THAT'S AN AWFUL LOT OF MONEY! AND THIS IS ALL FOR US!

I HAD TO FIGHT FOR IT, BUT HE FINALLY GAVE IN! AND HE WANTS MORE!

MORE?

BUT WE HAVE NO MORE LIKE THAT! WE MADE OTHERS BUT WE DESTROYED THEM!

OH, NO! THEN YOU'VE GOT TO MAKE THEM OVER!

WE COULDN'T! WE WOULDN'T BE INSPIRED!

INSPIRED?

WE MAKE TAPESTRIES LIKE THAT ONLY AFTER WE'VE SEEN A VIOLENT ACCIDENTAL DEATH!

THE ONE WE MADE AFTER FATHER DIED WAS OUR FIRST! HE FELL BENEATH THE WHEELS OF A TRAIN!

AND WE MADE SIX AFTER THAT! MR. GOLDEN'S WAS OUR LATEST! WE DESTROYED THE OTHERS!

THEN, IF...IF I COULD RUSH YOU TO THE SCENE OF AN ACCIDENTAL DEATH, YOU'D BE INSPIRED? RIGHT?

IF WE SAW THE BODY...

AND THE BLOOD!

IT HAD BEEN MADDENING! ERIC HAD HAD TO BUY A RADIO WITH A POLICE WAVELENGTH BAND. HE SAT, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, IN HIS ROOM... LISTENING... LISTENING -

CAR 23! CAR 23! GO TO NORTH AND MAIN! BAD ACCIDENT. ONE DEAD. TWO HURT! CAR 23! CAR 23! GOTO.

CHARLOTTE! GRACE! EMMA LOU! HURRY! IT'S RIGHT NEARBY!

WHEN ONE OF THOSE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN CALLS HAD COME IN, HE'D RUSHED THE OLD GALS TO THE SPOT. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, THEY'D ARRIVE TOO LATE

OH, THE BODY'S COVERED UP!

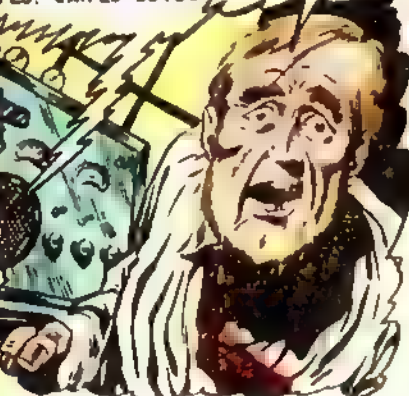
WE CAN'T SEE!

WHAT IF I UNCOVER

STAND BACK, YOU!

BUT THERE'D BEEN THOSE FORTUNATE TIMES WHEN THEY'D ARRIVED BEFORE THE POLICE. THE SISTERS HAD GAWKED AND GASPED AND ERIC HAD KNOWN HE'D HAVE HIS TAPESTRY BY MORNING.

WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME! MY DOUGH WAS RUNNING OUT!



THREE TIMES, FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS HAD GONE INTO ERIC'S POCKET WHILE THE SISTERS HAD RECEIVED BUT ONE NINTH THAT AMOUNT...

THIRTY...FORTY... FIFTY...THERE YOU ARE!

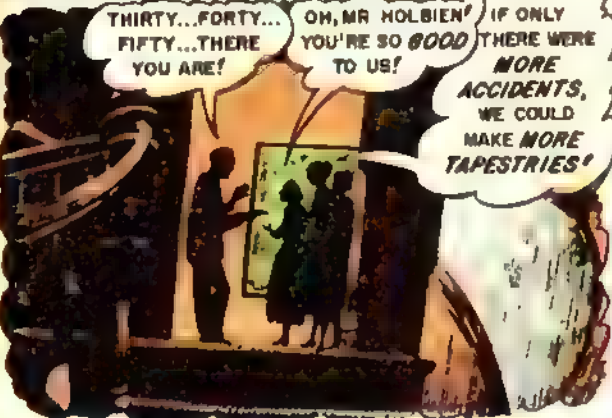
OH, MR HOLBIEN! YOU'RE SO GOOD TO US!

IF ONLY THERE WERE MORE ACCIDENTS, WE COULD MAKE MORE TAPESTRIES!

AND THEN IT HAD SUDDENLY OCCURED TO ERIC! MORE ACCIDENTS! OF COURSE! WHY HADN'T HE THOUGHT OF THAT BEFORE? IF THERE WEREN'T ENOUGH ACCIDENTS... HE COULD CAUSE THEM! OF COURSE!...

GOING INTO MILLVILLE?

SURE! HOP IN!



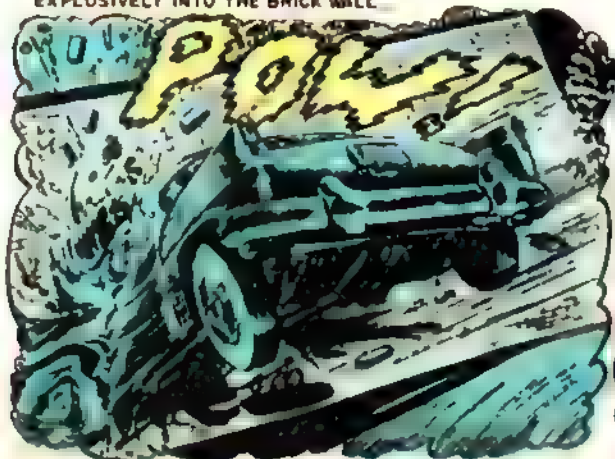
SO TONIGHT, HE'D WALKED A SHORT DISTANCE OUT OF TOWN AND HE'D THUMBED A RIDE AND BEEN PICKED UP. AND WHEN HIS POOR UNSUSPECTING VICTIM'D LOOKED THE OTHER WAY...

G-G-N-N-N-N-G!

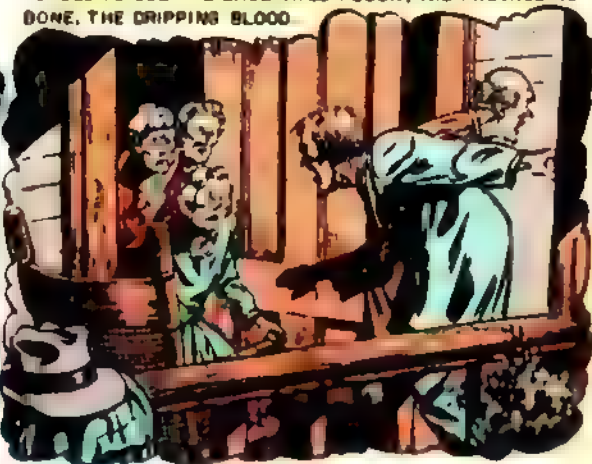
HE'D DRIVEN THE CAR TO THE STREET WHERE THE BOARDING HOUSE STOOD, PLACED THE UNCONSCIOUS MAN'S FOOT ON THE ACCELERATOR, RELEASED THE EMERGENCY BRAKE, AND HOPPED FROM THE CAR...



THE CAR HAD SPED DOWN THE STREET CRAZILY, GATHERING SPEED. THEN IT'D SPUN OUT OF CONTROL AND FLOWED EXPLOSIVELY INTO THE BRICK WALL.



AND HE'D WAITED FOR THE SISTERS TO COME FROM THE HOUSE. TO SEE THE LACERATED FLESH, THE PROTRUDING BONE, THE DRIPPING BLOOD.



AND NOW HE SAT UPON THE PORCH, ROCKER WAIT, WHILE UPSTAIRS, A LIGHT BLOWN IN THE WEAVING SISTERS' ROOM.



WIGHT AS WELL GO UP AND SEE HOW THEY'RE DOING!

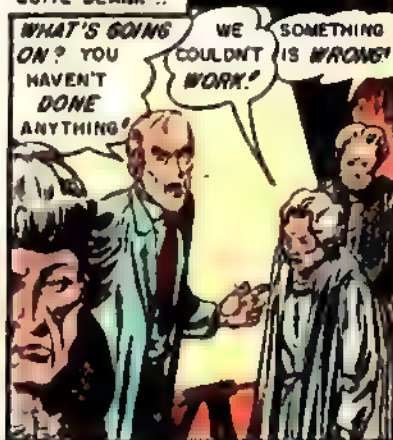
ERIC ENTERED THE BOARDING HOUSE AND CLIMBED THE STAIRS. MRS. CARTER AND HER OTHER ROOMERS HAD LONG SINCE GONE TO BED AND NOW LAY ENDURING TROUBLED DREAMS OF WHAT THEY'D WITNESSED EARLIER. HE KNOCKED SOFTLY.



WHO IS IT?

IT'S ME, ERIC! I CAME TO WATCH!

THE DOOR OPENED SLOWLY. ERIC ENTERED. HE LOOKED AROUND. THE CLOTH TACKED TAUTLY TO THE TAPESTRY-STRETCHER WAS BARE WHITE AND QUITE BLANK.



WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING!

WE COULDN'T WORK!

SOMETHING IS WRONG!

ERIC GREW ANGRY. HE THOUGHT OF MILTON WAITING IN NEW YORK WITH HIS CUSTOMER HUNGRY FOR MORE TAPES-TRIES. HE THOUGHT OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS AND THE GOOD TIMES IT WOULD BUY. AND HE SHOUTED...

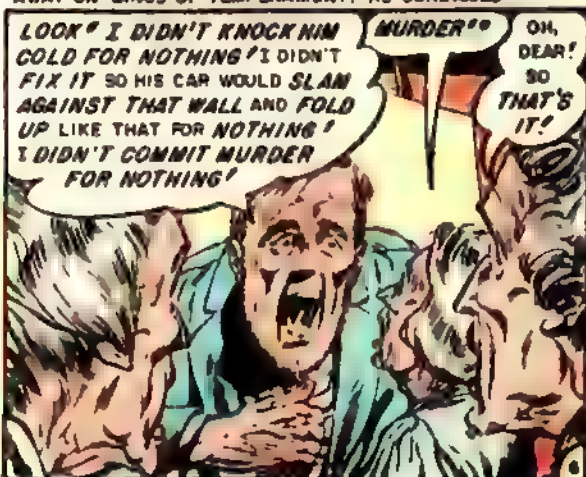


WASN'T THAT ACCIDENT GOOD ENOUGH? DIDN'T YOU SEE THE BODY AND THE BLOOD? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? START WEAVING!

WE'RE NOT INSPIRED!

WE WEREN'T MOVED!

ERIC SAW THE FIVE HUNDRED DOLLAR CHECK FLYING AWAY ON WINGS OF TEMPERAMENT. HE SCREAMED



LOOK! I DIDN'T KNOCK HIM GOLF FOR NOTHING! I DIDN'T FIX IT SO HIS CAR WOULD SLAM AGAINST THAT WALL AND FOLD UP LIKE THAT FOR NOTHING! I DIDN'T COMMIT MURDER FOR NOTHING!

MURDER!!

OH, DEAR! SO THAT'S IT!

THE OLD LADIES LOOKED AT EACH OTHER IN SHOCKED BEWILDERMENT. THEY TURNED TO ERIC ANGRILY...



IT'S GOT TO BE AN ACCIDENT...OR ELSE IT'S NOT ANY GOOD!

YOU TRIED TO TRICK US!

MURDER ISN'T FAIR!

THEY CAME AT HIM SLOWLY, GLIDING ON AGED LEGS, FONDLING THE INSTRUMENTS OF THEIR ART...THE SCISSORS AND THE LONG SHARP NEEDLES...



IT'S GOT TO BE AN ACCIDENT...LIKE WHEN WE PUSHED FATHER UNDER THE TRAIN...

OR LIKE WHEN WE PUSHED MR. GOLDEN IN FRONT OF THAT CAR...

OR THE OTHERS WE SO CLEVERLY MANAGED WHILE YOU WERE LISTENING TO YOUR STUPID LITTLE RADIO...

THEY STOOD OVER HIM LIKE THE THREE WITCHES IN MACBETH... OVER THEIR LIVING, WRITHING CAULDRON...



IT CAN'T BE MURDER!

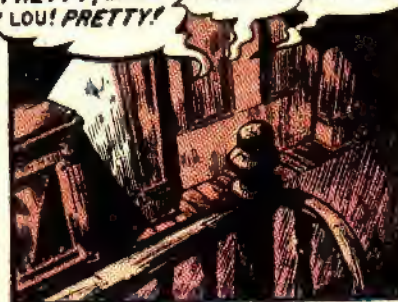
IT'S GOT TO BE A VIOLENT ACCIDENT!

LIKE WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU!

MRS. CARTER AND HER ROOMERS TOSSED IN THEIR TROUBLED SLEEPS, BUT NEVER HEARD THE MUFFLED SCREAMS THAT CAME FROM THE WEAVING SISTERS' ROOM... NEVER HEARD THE SNIPPING OF THEIR SCISSORS... THE CLICKING OF THEIR NEEDLES... THEIR GIGGLES OF SATISFACTION...

PRETTY, EMMA LOU! PRETTY!

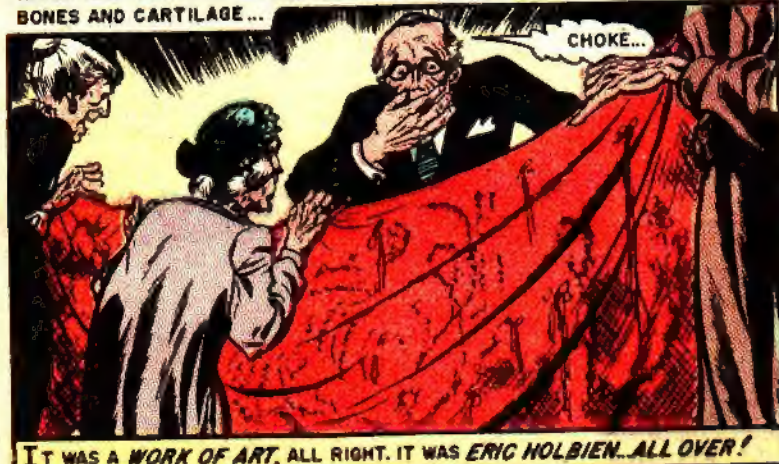
EH, EH, EH! SH-H-H!



AND WHEN ERIC'S FRIEND MILTON STEPPED FORWARD IN HIS GALLERY TO GREET THE THREE KINDLY-LOOKING OLD LADIES WHO ENTERED WITH THEIR LONG ROUND PACKAGE, HE NEVER DREAMED OF THE HORRORS THEY WERE CAPABLE OF WEAVING...

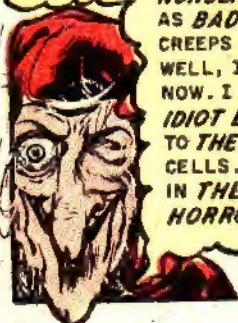


NOT UNTIL THEY UNROLLED THEIR LATEST TAPESTRY OF CROCHETED VEINS AND EMBROIDERED ARTERIES AND SEWN MUSCLES AND TENDONS AND FINGER- NAILS AND HAIR AND TACKED-DOWN EYEBALLS AND EARS AND STRUNG-UP BONES AND CARTILAGE...



IT WAS A WORK OF ART, ALL RIGHT. IT WAS ERIC HOLBIEN...ALL OVER!

HEE, HEE! YEP! THE THREE OLD GIRLS WERE NUTS, ALL RIGHT... JUST LIKE ALL ARTISTS... INCLUDING THE BATTY-BOYS AT E.C.! WELL, THEY MUST BE BATTY TO DRAW THIS TRASH. HEE, HEE! AND TALKING ABOUT CRAZY PEOPLE, THIS WINDS UP C.K.'S MAG... WHICH YOU BOUGHT! HEE, HEE! AND ANYBODY WHO BUYS THIS NAUSEATING NONSENSE MUST BE AS BAD OFF AS THE CREEPS WHO DRAW IT. WELL, I GOTTA GO NOW. I GOTTA LEAD MY IDIOT EDITORS BACK TO THEIR PADDED CELLS. SEE YOU NEXT IN THE VAULT OF HORROR! 'BYE NOW!

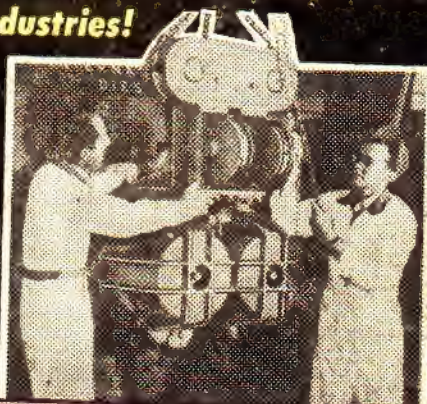


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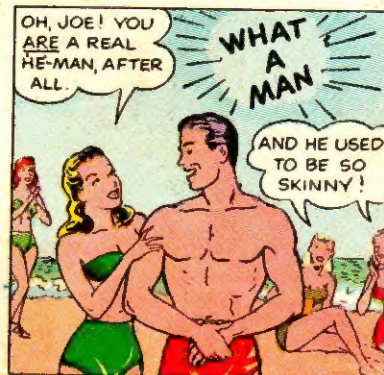
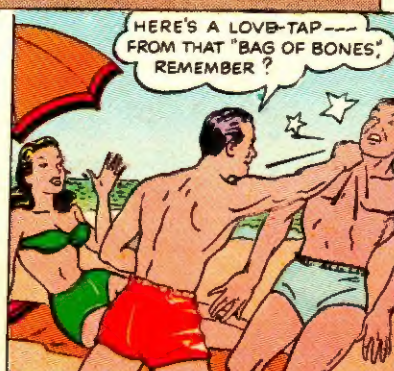
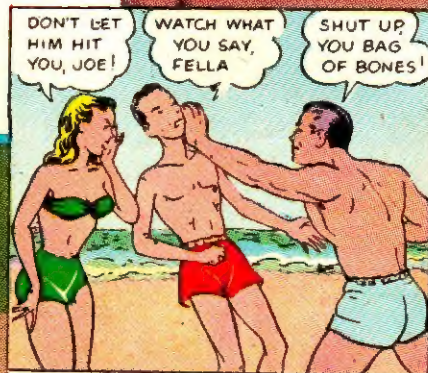
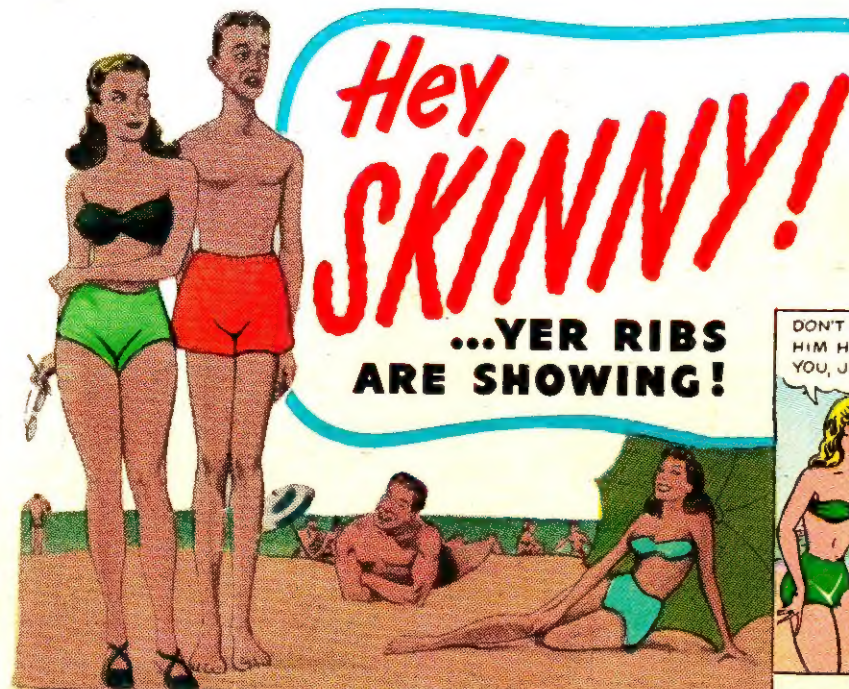
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